The judgment seat of Christ will be operable in one realm alone —

man’s actions, following his salvation.

That which will come under review in that day

will be “*works*” emanating out of either *faithfulness* or *unfaithfulness* —

works comparable to “*gold, silver, precious stones*,”

or works comparable to “*wood, hay, stubble*”

**Judgment Seat of Christ BOOK**

**By Arlen Chitwood of** [**Lamp Broadcast**](http://lampbroadcast.org/)

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**Foreword**

The judgment seat of Christ will be operable in *one realm alone — man’s actions, following his salvation*. That which will come under review in that day will be “works” emanating out of either *faithfulness* or *unfaithfulness* — works comparable to “*gold, silver, precious stones*,” or works comparable to “*wood, hay, straw*” ([1 Corinthians 3:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.12-13&t=NKJV)).

Nothing pertaining to man’s eternal salvation (based entirely upon that which Christ has done) can come into view at this judgment, for God has *already judged* sin in the person of His Son at Calvary. And *God is satisfied with His Son’s finished work.*

In this respect, all judgment relative to eternal salvation is *past* and *can never again* be brought up as an issue. “He who believes in Him [Christ] is not condemned [Greek: *krino*; *lit.*, ‘is not judged,’ *i.e.*, the one who has believed on Christ *can never* be brought into judgment at any future time (for judgment has already occurred in past time)] . . . .” ([John 3:18a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.18a&t=NKJV)).

And this is what bothers some Christians about thoughts surrounding the judgment seat of Christ. Scriptures such as [John 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.18&t=NKJV) clearly state that *no Christian can ever be brought into judgment*. Yet, Scriptures such as [2 Corinthians 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10&t=NKJV) — “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ* . . . .” — also clearly state that *judgment awaits all Christians*.

This can become quite confusing unless one recognizes that *two entirely different matters are being dealt with*. One has to do with God’s judgment upon sin, based upon His Son’s finished work at Calvary, *with eternal salvation in view.* And the other has to do with God’s subsequent judgment upon His household servants relative to their faithfulness or unfaithfulness as servants in the Lord’s house, *with the Messianic Era in view*.

The former judgment — a past judgment upon sin, based on the Son’s finished work at Calvary — in actuality, has to do *not only with saved man but with unsaved man as well.*

Note the complete verse in [John 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.18&t=NKJV):

*He who believes in Him is not condemned* [is not judged]: *but he who does not believe is condemned already* [has already been judged (a perfect tense in the Greek text, referring to a judgment that occurred in past time — a judgment no longer occurring during present time, for *the matter has been finished*)], *because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*.”

*Judgment* for the sin question (sin brought into existence by and through Adam’s fall in [Genesis 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3&t=NKJV)) *has already occurred*. It occurred in past time *for both the saved and the unsaved* — for the saved, *with respect to belief*; for the unsaved, *with respect to unbelief.*

For the former (the saved), they have been judged in past time, through a Substitute.

*They have believed*, and a Substitute (Christ) has paid sin’s penalty (death) on their behalf.

For the latter (the unsaved), they have been judged in past time as well, but apart from a Substitute. *They have not believed*, and there, consequently, is no Substitute to pay sin’s penalty (death) on their behalf. They will have to pay the penalty themselves. Judgment itself has already occurred, but the payment for sin’s penalty awaits.

And, at any future judgment — whether a judgment of the saved or a judgment of the unsaved (all are to be judged at times in the future, in separate judgments) — the issue of the sin question and eternal salvation or eternal damnation *can never resurface*. Once an individual moves beyond this life — beyond the point where he can either believe or not believe, whether he is saved or unsaved — it is a finished matter; his eternal salvation is sealed; he has already been judged in this respect, for it is all inseparably connected with Christ’s past finished work on the cross and God’s past judgment relative to this finished work.

This is the reason that any future judgment of man, whether saved or unsaved, is always seen to be on the basis of *the works of the individual being judged* — works emanating out of faithfulness (one class of the saved), out of unfaithfulness (another class of the saved), or out of no faith (the unsaved).

For a judgment of the saved with respect to works, refer to [1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV); for a judgment of the unsaved with respect to *works*, refer to [Revelation. 20:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation.+20.11-15&t=NKJV).

*each one’s work will become clear* . . . .” ([1 Corinthians 3:13a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.13a&t=NKJV))

. . . *And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books*. ([Revelation 20:12b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.12b&t=NKJV))

But, calling attention to things surrounding *the saved alone* throughout the remainder of this foreword, the difference between past and future judgments could be compared to the distance between the east and the west. It is only because of the former (God’s past judgment relative to the sin question, based entirely on Christ’s finished work) that the latter can occur (judgment on the basis of works emanating out of faithfulness or unfaithfulness); and the latter can have nothing to do with the former in the sense of nullifying, adding to, taking from, etc.

The two are completely separate in this respect. Once a person has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ — has passed “*from death to life*” — that individual comes into a relationship with God that heretofore did not exist in his life. He becomes *a new creation “in Christ,”* part of the family of God; and he then finds himself among household servants who are being dealt with accordingly.

Following an individual believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, God deals with that individual on an entirely different plane — *as a household servant, with a view to the Messianic Era lying out ahead*. The individual is *never again* dealt with (during present or future time, or at a future judgment) on the basis of that which is past — Christ’s finished work, effecting his eternal salvation.

*Everything* having to do with God’s judgment in this respect is *past.* The person *has already been judged* (via God’s judgment upon a Substitute, upon His Son at Calvary, who paid the penalty for sin on the person’s behalf).

And this fact alone should put to rest any thought that saved man could ever one day become unsaved, lost again. How could he? Such would be impossible, for God never deals with saved man on this basis (and this would be aside from the fact that man’s salvation is not based on anything that he has done to begin with, but on that which *Christ alone has done*).

But that which numerous Christians fail to recognize is the fact that they are directly responsible, as household servants, to the One who sent His Son to die in their stead. And, as household servants, they will one day stand before their Savior (to whom God has committed all judgment) to give an account relative to *faithfulness* or *unfaithfulness* in the Lord’s house.

The judgment seat of Christ will be operable *in this realm alone*, and decisions and determinations emanating from findings at the judgment seat will result in two things:

*1) Reward on the one hand.*

*2) Loss on the other hand.*

And both will have to do with *the Messianic Era*, not with eternal life.

And within both there will be *a just reward* [KJV: recompense] ([Hebrews 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.2&t=NKJV); [11:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.26&t=NKJV)) — receiving *exactly* what an individual deserves, *receiving wages exactly commensurate with the person’s faithfulness or unfaithfulness as a servant in the Lord’s house* (*cf.* [Luke 12:42-46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+12.42-46&t=NKJV)).

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Chapter 1

**Eternally Saved, But . . .**

Eternal life is the *free* “gift of God,” obtained completely apart from works. *Nothing* that man does — *not one single act, either before or after he becomes a recipient of this life* — can have anything at all to do with his salvation, for he has been saved *solely by grace through faith*; and his salvation is based *entirely on the work of Another.*

Christ’s finished work at Calvary provides a means of salvation that fallen man can avail himself of *by and through one revealed means alone*: by and through receiving that which has already been accomplished on his behalf.

*Works* are involved in man’s presently possessed eternal salvation, *but not man’s works*. Rather, they are the works of the One who procured this salvation. Ruined man himself is *totally incapable* of works. He can’t operate in the spiritual realm, for he is “*dead* [spiritually] *in trespasses and sins*” ([Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV)).

Thus, since redeemed man had nothing to do with bringing to pass his presently possessed eternal salvation; he can never be brought into any type of judgment where the issue surrounds that which he acquired through Christ's finished work at Calvary. A judgment of this nature would not only be judging that which man had nothing to do with, but it would also be judging once again that which God has already judged. God judged sin at Calvary in the person of His Son, and God is satisfied.

Accordingly, the judgment seat of Christ cannot function in the realm of one’s eternal salvation. Decisions and determinations made at this judgment MUST be based *solely upon the actions of the justified — actions following their coming into possession of eternal salvation.*

By Grace through Faith

*For by grace you are saved [you have been saved] through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

*Not of works, lest any man should boast.* ([Ephesians 2:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-9&t=NKJV))

*Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us . .* ([Titus 3:5a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+3.5a&t=NKJV))

To properly understand issues surrounding the judgment seat of Christ one must begin with a due appreciation for the salvation that Christians presently possess — a salvation that is non-merited and non-forfeitable.

Salvation for fallen man is both *free* and *apart from works*, but the procurement of this salvation by God’s Son was by no means free and apart from works. God’s Son provided this salvation through a vicarious sacrifice — the sacrifice of Himself; and fallen man can do no more than simply receive that which has been provided.

1) It Has Been Finished

Note the words “*not of yourselves*” and “*that we have done*” in [Ephesians 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8&t=NKJV) and [Titus 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+3.5&t=NKJV). Both refer to the necessity of the *total absence of works* on man’s part in relation to eternal salvation. The work has already been accomplished; the price has already been paid. When Christ cried out on the cross, “*It is finished*" ([John 19:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.30&t=NKJV)), He announced *the completion of a redemptive work that He alone could bring to pass.*

The words, “*It is finished*,” in [John 19:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.30&t=NKJV) are the translation of one word in the Greek text (*Tetelestai*). This word is in the perfect tense and could be better translated, “It has been finished.” That is, at this point, *everything* relating to the work of redemption had been accomplished. *Nothing* *more* remained to be done; and, consequently, there was no need for Christ to delay His death. Accordingly, immediately after Christ cried out, “*Tetelestai*,” “*He bowed His head and gave up His spirit* [Greek: *pneuma*, ‘spirit,’ *i.e*., ‘breath’; He breathed out, expired].”

The perfect tense in the Greek text calls attention to a work *completed* in past time, with the *results* of this work extending into the present and existing in a *finished* state. This is the same verb tense used in [Ephesians 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8&t=NKJV) relative to the present state of redeemed man (“*you are saved*”; literally “you have been saved”). Redeemed man is in possession of a salvation (present) wherein *everything* has already been accomplished (past) on his behalf.

The Holy Spirit has performed a work (breathing life into the one having no life [*cf*. [Genesis 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.7&t=NKJV); [Ezekiel 37:1-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+37.1-10&t=NKJV)]) based on Christ’s completed work (at Calvary). Both are past works, and one can no more be nullified than the other.

Redeemed man is as totally helpless to *undo* anything that has been accomplished in bringing about his redemption as he was to do something to accomplish his redemption in the first place. Work completed in past time through divine intervention is *not* something that man can change, add to, take from, etc.

Consequently, contrary to what is often taught in certain quarters, redeemed man *cannot* nullify the past work of the Holy Spirit in effecting his present redeemed state, wrought on the basis of Christ’s finished work. Redeemed man can no more nullify the Spirit’s work in salvation than he can nullify Christ’s finished work at Calvary.

Both constitute past, completed works wrought through divine intervention, and man is *completely powerless* to act in these realms.

2) God’s Established, Unchangeable Pattern

Almost 6,000 years ago, God created man. Then, resulting from satanic intervention, man fell. Man became a ruined creation. And this was followed by God setting about to restore His ruined creation.

God’s work surrounding man’s restoration was preceded by His work surrounding a restoration of the material creation upon which man was to reside. Satanic activity had brought about the ruin of the material creation, and then subsequently man’s ruin ([Genesis 3:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.1ff&t=NKJV); [Isaiah 14:12-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.12-17&t=NKJV); [Ezekiel 28:14-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.14-19&t=NKJV)), and divine activity alone could bring about restoration of both ([Genesis 1:2b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2b&t=NKJV) ff).

Ruined man finds himself in exactly the same condition as the ruined earth, seen in [Genesis 1:2a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2a&t=NKJV). Satanic activity brought about man’s ruin, and divine activity alone can bring about his restoration. Man is no more capable of bringing himself out of his ruined state than was the ruined earth. And, apart from divine intervention — as occurred in the restoration of the ruined earth — man would have remained in his ruined condition forever (as the ruined earth, apart from divine intervention, would have had to remain in its ruined condition forever, as well).

The former restoration sets the pattern for the latter restoration. The former is God’s *unchangeable pattern* concerning how He restores a ruined creation, *forever established* *in the openings verses of Genesis*. Man, a subsequent ruined creation of God, *MUST be restored in complete accordance with the established pattern.*

In the Genesis account, the Spirit of God moved, God spoke, and light came into existence. And matters are *exactly the same* relative to ruined man today, *i.e*. relative to a subsequent ruined creation.

*Exactly as in the Genesis account*, the first thing that must occur is the movement of the Spirit of God. And insofar as ruined man is concerned, this initial act of the Spirit is that of breathing life into the one who is “*dead in trespasses and sins*.”

And the Spirit is able to do this work on the basis of *death and shed blood, for apart from death and shed blood, there can be no salvation* (*cf.* [Genesis 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.21&t=NKJV); [4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+4.10&t=NKJV) [[Hebrews 12:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.24&t=NKJV)]; [Genesis 22:7-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.7-13&t=NKJV); [Exodus 12:3-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.3-13&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 10:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.22&t=NKJV)). In this respect, the Spirit today breathes life into the one having no life on the basis of the finished work of God’s Son at Calvary.

The living Word has performed the work, and God has spoken concerning the matter ([Exodus 12:6-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.6-7&t=NKJV), [12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.12-13&t=NKJV)). The Spirit moves, God speaks, and light comes into existence (man is born from above). And God then divides between the light and the darkness (God divides between spirit and soul, between that which is associated with the man of spirit and that which is associated with the man of flesh).

Thus, the pattern concerning how God restores a ruined creation was set forth at the very beginning of His Word ([Genesis 1:2b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2b&t=NKJV) ff). And this God-established pattern *can never change*.

(Note also that a time element was involved in God’s *complete restoration* of the material creation — six days, followed by a Sabbath, a seventh day of rest. This points to the six days [6,000 years] comprising Man’s Day, to be followed by a Sabbath, a seventh day of rest [a seventh 1,000-year period], the Messianic Era [*cf.* [Hebrews 4:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.4&t=NKJV), [9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.9&t=NKJV)].

It will only be at the end of the six days [6,000 years] comprising Man’s Day that man will be completely restored — body, soul, and spirit—as the material creation was completely restored at the end of six days in the Genesis account. Only then will the Sabbath within this complete sequence ensue; only then will there be a day [a 1000-year period] of rest.

As in the established pattern in Genesis, so will it be in that which events in this pattern foreshadow [[Exodus 31:13-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+31.13-17&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 1:16-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.16-18&t=NKJV); [3:3-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.3-8&t=NKJV)].)

Blood and Leaven

*For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.*

*Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.*

*So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.*

*Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.* ([Exodus 12:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.12-15&t=NKJV))

There is a dual truth taught in Exodus chapters twelve and thirteen concerning *the application of blood* and the *expelling of leaven*. These chapters introduce the first two “*feasts of the LORD*” in the prophetic calendar of Israel — the “*Passover*” and the “*Feast of Unleavened Bread*” (*cf.* [Leviticus 23:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Leviticus+23.1ff&t=NKJV)). “Blood” from the paschal lambs was to be applied *first*. Then, those who had applied the blood were to put “*leaven out of their houses*.” This is the unchangeable order established by God in the book of Exodus.

In these two chapters, the sentence of death had fallen upon the firstborn throughout all the land of Egypt ([Exodus 12:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.4-5&t=NKJV)). The firstborn in every household, Israelite and Egyptian alike, *must die*. However, provision was made for all the firstborn in Israel to experience death vicariously. Every household was to take a lamb from the flock, the lamb was to be slain, and blood from the lamb was to be applied “*on the two side posts and on the upper door post*” of every house throughout the camp of Israel.

When the Lord passed through the land of Egypt to execute the sentence of death, *He looked for one thing* at each house.  *He looked for the blood* upon the entrance way. The *presence of blood* showed that the firstborn in that household had already died. Death had occurred vicariously through a slain lamb from the flock. The Lord then *passed over* that house. The *absence of blood*, on the other hand, showed that the firstborn had not yet died. Death then *occurred* at the hands of the Lord, for the firstborn in every household MUST die.

It cannot be overemphasized that the *only thing* that the Lord looked for on this particular night was the *blood*. “. . . *when I see the blood, I will pass over you*” ([Exodus 12:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.12-13&t=NKJV)). *Nothing else* was in view; and once the death of the firstborn had been executed, *that was the end of the matter*. Those who died vicariously held the same position relative to death in the eyes of the Lord as those who died apart from a substitute. The death of the firstborn had occurred in both instances, and God was satisfied. *Nothing* could*,* at a later time, be reversed.

In the antitype of this aspect of Exodus chapters eleven and twelve, “*Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us* [‘was sacrificed on our behalf'’]” ([1 Corinthians 5:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+5.7&t=NKJV)). His blood was shed; and those who have appropriated His blood, through faith, have died vicariously. Death has occurred through the slain Lamb, as in Exodus chapter twelve. “*Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures*” ([Exodus 12:1-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.1-13&t=NKJV), [29-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.29-30&t=NKJV); [John 1:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.29&t=NKJV); [19:16-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.16-30&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 15:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.3&t=NKJV)). And an individual availing himself of this provision has already kept the appointment with death referred to in [Hebrews 9:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.27&t=NKJV). The death of the firstborn is past, God is satisfied, and *that is the end of the matter.* As in Exodus chapter twelve, *nothing* can, at a later time, be reversed.

Following the Passover in Egypt, God dealt with the Israelites on an entirely different plane. The Israelites, from this time forward, were dealt with *on the basis of* that which had occurred in Egypt, NEVER *relative* to this matter. And it is the same with Christians today. Christians are dealt with strictly *on the basis of that which Christ has done on their behalf, NEVER relative to this matter.*

Immediately following the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread commenced. Beginning with this festival, God dealt with the Israelites relative to “leaven” in their houses, *NOT relative* to that which had previously occurred (the death of the firstborn) and was now a past, finished matter. They were to put leaven out of their houses, and they were to eat unleavened bread for seven days. “Seven” is *God’s number*, as “six” is *man’s number*. “Six” shows *incompleteness*, and “seven” shows *completeness*, with “eight” indicating a *new beginning*. The Israelites were to put leaven out of their houses and eat unleavened bread for *seven* days — one complete period of time.

Leaven points to that which is *vile* or *corrupt*; it points to sin in the lives of individuals. And the spiritual significance of this festival surrounded the fact that the Israelites, as God’s redeemed people, were to put that which was vile, corrupt, associated with sin, out of the camp for *one complete period of time*. This period of time had to do with the existence of the nation from that point forward.

An individual Israelite refusing to expel the leaven was “*cut off from Israel”* (*cf*. [Exodus 12:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.15&t=NKJV); [Psalm 37:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+37.9&t=NKJV), [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+37.22&t=NKJV), [28-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+37.28-29&t=NKJV), [34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+37.34&t=NKJV)). He died on the *right side* of the blood. He was cut off from Israel, not from God. The same held true for the entire accountable generation subsequently cut off following events at Kadesh-Barnea. They too died on the right side of the blood. Their failure to enter into the land, resulting in their overthrow in the wilderness, had no bearing upon their standing before God on the basis of that which had previously occurred the night of the Passover in Egypt.

The entire matter is the same in Christendom today. Christians are commanded to “*keep the feast*,” which is to be done in a new way, “*with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*” ([1 Corinthians 5:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+5.8&t=NKJV)). Christians are to put that which is vile, corrupt, associated with sin out of their lives for one complete period of time — the entire duration of the Christian life.

Christians refusing to expel the leaven will, as the Israelites who refused to expel the leaven, be “*cut off*.”

The Israelites under Moses were called out of Egypt to go into another land and realize an inheritance awaiting the nation. Those cut off in Israel forfeited the realization of their calling. They fell on the *right side* of the blood but *outside* the land to which they had been called.

And so it is with Christians. Those refusing to expel the leaven will forfeit the realization of their calling. They will fall on the *right side* of the blood but *outside* the land to which they have been called. Such a failure, as in the type, will have no bearing upon that which previously occurred in their lives through the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit in effecting their standing before God.

Many Christians, because of the sins of the flesh, have their lives cut short during the present time. However, this is not the primary meaning of being “*cut off*.” Those “*cut off*” in Israel were separated from *a realization of their calling*. They were called out of Egypt for a purpose; and most were overthrown, failing to realize *the goal of their calling*.

Such an overthrow for Christians in the antitype awaits the issues of the judgment seat of Christ, for it is there that decisions and determinations that directly affect Christians relative to their calling will be made. God will not countenance sin in the lives of His people; and before the judgment seat, the harbored sins of Christians will be brought out into the open and dealt with. Those refusing to judge their sins prior to that time, availing themselves of the high priestly ministry of Christ, will then be judged. Their sins in that day though will be dealt with in an entirely different manner; for, at that time, Christ will be their *Judge* rather than their *High Priest* (*cf.* [1 Corinthians 11:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+11.31&t=NKJV); [1 John 1:9-2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.9-2.2&t=NKJV)).

Basis for Judgment

*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

*Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,*

*each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.*

*If anyone’s work that he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.*

*If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.* ([1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV))

Something little understood today is the fact that the “basis” for God’s judgments is always *works*.

God judged sin at Calvary, *based on Christ’s completed work*; and when God views redeemed man today, He views this past completed work of His Son and past judgment upon sin. Redeemed man, by and through the Spirit having breathed into him, possesses spiritual life; and Christ’s righteous, justifying act — His finished work at Calvary — has been reckoned as merit to him ([Romans 5:16-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.16-18&t=NKJV); [Philemon 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philemon+1.18&t=NKJV)).

However, redeemed man in this standing before God is directly responsible to his Creator; and he, in his justified state, will himself be judged on the basis of *works — his own works*, performed following salvation ([Matthew16:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthe+16.27&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 3:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.12-15&t=NKJV)).

And *works* are the basis for all God’s subsequent judgments upon man — Israel, the living Gentiles coming out of the Great Tribulation, and those appearing before the Great White Throne. Man’s appearance or nonappearance at a particular judgment, or place in this judgment (*e.g*., man’s appearance at the judgment seat of Christ, or at the great white throne judgment 1,000 years later), is dependent on his *acceptance* or *rejection* of the *past work of Another*; but judgment of the individual will be on the basis of *his own works*, which will be performed either as a redeemed or as an unredeemed individual ([Ezekiel 20:34-38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+20.34-38&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 5:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.9-11&t=NKJV); [Revelation 20:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.11-15&t=NKJV)).

Before the judgment seat of Christ, “*Every man’s work will become clear* (KJV: ‘shall be made manifest’) . . . *it shall be revealed by* [in] *fire*.” There will be works comparable to “*gold, silver, precious stones*”; and there will be works comparable to “*wood, hay, straw*.” One set of material reveals works of intrinsic value, which will endure the fire; but the other set of material reveals valueless works, which will be burned in the fire.

Works performed by Christians during the present time can vary a great deal in worth. Such works can be performed under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and redound to the praise, honor, and glory of the Lord; or such works can be performed under the leadership of man and redound to the praise, honor, and glory of man. At the judgment seat, all will be revealed; for “*the fire shall test each one’s work, of what sort it is*.”

1) *Works . . . Revealed by Fire*

Works emanate out of faithfulness to one’s calling and bring faith to its proper goal, which will result in the salvation of one’s soul (*cf*. [James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:5-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.5-11&t=NKJV)). At the judgment seat, the worth of every man’s work in this realm will be revealed; and decisions and determinations emanating out of this judgment will determine every man’s position in the coming kingdom (*cf.* [Matthew 16:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.24-27&t=NKJV); [24:45-51](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.45-51&t=NKJV); [25:14-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.14-30&t=NKJV); [Luke 19:12-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.12-27&t=NKJV)).

“Judgment” on the basis of works is alien to the thinking of many Christians, for they have been exposed time and again to a proclamation of salvation by grace through faith apart from works, *unbalanced* by the proclamation of the coming judgment of Christians on the basis of works. The emphasis has been placed almost entirely upon the finished work of Christ at Calvary, with little regard given to Christian living, the coming judgment seat, and the coming kingdom.

Teachings of this nature have centered almost solely on the salvation that we presently possess; and things having to do with the inheritance awaiting Christians, the salvation of the soul, etc., have been removed from their respective contexts and applied to our present salvation. Ministries centering on this type of teaching in the churches have produced both confusion and complacency in Christendom.

Then, there is another type widespread teaching in the churches that recognizes works but has every Christian performing good works. The reasoning of those who teach along these lines centers on the thought that if a person is really saved he will produce good works; if, on the other hand he doesn’t produce good works, this simply shows that he was never really saved in the first place. Aside from being completely contrary to any Scriptural teaching on the subject, such a teaching produces both an erroneous view of salvation by grace through faith and an erroneous view of issues surrounding the judgment seat of Christ.

If every Christian produces good works to show that he has been saved, then works enter into an area where works cannot exist.

*And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.* ([Romans 11:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.6&t=NKJV))

The presence or absence of works on the part of Christians can have no connection whatsoever with their prior reception of the finished work of Christ. Christ’s finished work *allows* an individual to be placed in the position where he *can produce* good works. There is nothing in Scripture that teaches that he, of necessity, *will produce good works*. Such would be completely contrary to the teaching of salvation by grace through faith apart from works. Man’s works simply cannot enter into salvation by grace at any time, either preceding or following salvation.

Relative to eternal salvation, man simply cannot do anything to:

1) Be saved.

2) Stay saved.

3) Show that he has been saved.

If man could do any one of the three, salvation would cease to be by grace through faith, for man’s works would have entered into an area where works of this nature cannot exist.

If it be maintained that every Christian *must* produce good works to show that he has been saved, then it *must* follow that every Christian would appear at the judgment seat of Christ with works that would “*abide*” the fire. Possessing works of this nature, every Christian would “*receive a reward*.”

But such a thought is at once seen to be erroneous by reference to the text in [1 Corinthians 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3&t=NKJV). There will be Christians appearing at the judgment seat who will “*suffer loss*” and “*be saved; yet so as by* [through] *fire*” ([1 Corinthians 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.15&t=NKJV)). ALL of their works will be burned, but they themselves will “*be saved*,” *i.e*., *they themselves will be delivered*. And this *deliverance* will occur “through fire.”

This *deliverance* at the judgment seat can have nothing to do with eternal salvation, for all issues surrounding one’s eternal salvation, whether during the present time or at the future judgment seat, are *past issues* (*e.g.*, Christ’s finished work at Calvary, the Spirit’s finished work of breathing life into the one having no life, allowing him to pass “*from death to life*”). God judged sin in the person of His Son at Calvary, God is satisfied; and the Spirit can breathe life into the one having no life, on the basis of the finished work of God’s Son.

And this work of the triune Godhead is *a past, finished deliverance that could never be referred to in the future sense* seen in [1 Corinthians 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.15&t=NKJV).

The *deliverance* seen in [1 Corinthians 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.15&t=NKJV) is, contextually, *a deliverance out of the fire at the judgment seat.* Though all of the person’s works will be burned and he will appear naked in Christ’s presence ([Revelation 3:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.17-18&t=NKJV)), he himself will not be burned. Rather, he will be delivered — *delivered from being burned with his works.*

But, though he himself will be delivered in this respect, “*so as through fire*,” he will be unable to escape the dire consequences that will result from his works being consumed by the fire and his consequent naked appearance. And there can be no deliverance from these consequences, for there will have to be a “*just reward* [KJV: ‘*just recompense*’] — exact payment for services rendered in the house during the time of the Lord’s absence. If not, God would not be perfectly just and righteous in His dealings with His household servants.

One-sided views of the judgment seat that maintain that every Christian will appear with good works are little different than the teaching that ignores works. Confusion and complacency, once again, can only be the ultimate result.

Much of the preceding, erroneous teaching is fostered by a misunderstanding of [1 Corinthians 4:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+4.5&t=NKJV). This verse in the King James Version reads,

*Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.* ([1 Corinthians 4:5 KJV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+4.5&t=KJV))

The problem emanates from both a mistranslation in the text and a non-contextual understanding of the words, “*then shall every man have praise of God*.” The words “*every man*” could be better translated “*each man*”; and the reference is back to the *faithful stewards* in verse two. Faithful stewards will, individually, receive praise from God; but there is nothing in Scripture that teaches that “*every man*,” which, apart from the context would also include unfaithful stewards, will receive such praise. To the contrary, Scripture quite clearly reveals that *both faithful and unfaithful stewards will appear at the judgment seat*, that the judgment seat will be operable in *two realms*, and that *faithful stewards alone* will receive praise of God.

2) *If Anyone’s Work . . . Endures*

“Rewards” are being reserved for the *faithful alone*. This is one side of the judgment seat. Christians have been “*created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*” ([Ephesians 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.10&t=NKJV)). Works of this nature, performed by a Christian exhibiting faithfulness to his calling, will “*endure*” at the judgment seat. They will be manifested as works comparable to “*gold, silver, precious stones*” and will endure the fire. Such works will result in the Christian receiving a reward and a position with Christ in the kingdom.

Works that endure the fire will be the type works necessary to bring faith to its proper goal, resulting in the salvation of the Christian’s soul. Following the testing of such works, the Christian will receive praise from his Lord. He will hear his Lord say, “*Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things . . .* . ([Matthew 25:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.21&t=NKJV), [23a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.23a&t=NKJV) [21a]).

And he will subsequently be positioned, in a regal capacity, among those destined to rule as joint-heirs with Christ ([Matthew 24:45-47](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.45-47&t=NKJV); [25:19-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.19-23&t=NKJV): [Luke 19:15-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.15-19&t=NKJV)).

3) *If Anyone’s Work is Burned*

“Suffering loss” is in store for the unfaithful. This is the other side of the judgment seat. It is possible for a Christian to appear before the judgment seat of Christ without one single good work to his credit. He may have works, but not works done under the direction of the Holy Spirit, for the praise, honor, and glory of the Lord. Such works, comparable to “*wood, hay, straw*” will be burned. They will not endure the fire. But the Christian himself “*will be saved* [delivered]; *yet so as by* [through] *fire.*”

The presence of works, the absence of works, or the type works can have no bearing on his eternal salvation, *wrought completely apart from his own works*. He will come out of this judgment, as Lot from Sodom, with nothing to show but escape from the condemnation befalling the unregenerate.

Works consumed by fire will be the type of works unable to bring faith to its proper goal, resulting in the loss of the Christian's soul. Following the testing of such works, the Christian will be *rebuked* by his Lord. He will hear his Lord say: “*Thou wicked and slothful servant* . . . .” ([Matthew 25:26a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.26a&t=NKJV)).

Then, that which had been entrusted to him during the time of his Lord’s absence will be taken from him. He will be denied a position with Christ in the kingdom, a position that could have been his had he previously exercised faithfulness in his calling; and he will be appointed “*his portion with the hypocrites*” ([Matthew 24:48-51](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.48-51&t=NKJV); [25:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.19&t=NKJV), [24-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.24-30&t=NKJV); [Luke 19:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.15&t=NKJV), [20-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.20-26&t=NKJV)).

He will then find himself cast “without,” into the place that Scripture calls, “the outer darkness” (ASV). In this place there will be “the weeping and the gnashing of teeth [an Eastern expression showing deep grief]” (ASV) on the part of Christians who realize too late that they could have occupied one of the proffered positions with Christ in His kingdom. Their rights as firstborn sons — the rights of primogeniture — will have been forfeited; and they, as Esau, will lift up their voices and weep.

(For a detailed discussion of “the outer darkness,” refer to [Cast Outside into Outer Darkness](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-three.php#Cast%20Outside%20into%20Outer%20Darkness) in this site.)

Concluding Thoughts:

*Receiving rewards* or *suffering loss* at the judgment seat of Christ are grave issues about which most Christians seem to know very little, or, for that matter, appear to even be concerned. But such will have no bearing upon the fact that there is a day coming in the not too-distant future when every Christian MUST render an account to his Lord for the “*things done in his body*” ([2 Corinthians 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10&t=NKJV)).

*Events of that day* will come to pass at the end of the present dispensation, immediately preceding the Messianic Era; *issues of that day* will surround a review of the works performed by Christians in view of their receiving rewards or suffering loss; *the purpose of that day*, aside from providing a “*just reward* [KJV: ‘*just recompense*’], will be to make decisions and determinations concerning Christians occupying positions with Christ in His 1,000-year rule from the heavens over the earth.

Everything is moving toward that 1,000-year Messianic Era when God’s Son will reign supreme. Man’s Day, in conjunction with *his rule* over the earth, is about to end; and the Lord’s Day, in conjunction with *His rule* over the earth, is about to commence. A kingdom, such as the coming kingdom of Christ, requires a King with numerous *vice-regents*. Christians are today being tested, tried, and refined with a view to that coming day.

Events of the entire present dispensation revolve around the thought that God is today calling out the vice-regents who will reign with His Son during the coming dispensation; and the presence of the Church upon the earth will extend, in one sense of the word, to that point in time when God will have acquired the necessary rulers to occupy the proffered positions in the kingdom under Christ. It will extend to that point in time when the Spirit successfully completes His search for a bride for God’s Son.

The removal of the Church and the appearance of Christians before the judgment seat will involve the issues of two dispensations: *The basis for this judgment* will have to do with works, *emanating out of faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the Lord’s servants during a past dispensation* (the activity of Christians during the present dispensation, which will be *past* in that coming day).

*The purpose for this judgment will have to do with Christians participating in the reign of God’s Son during the coming dispensation* (co-heirs ascending the throne with God’s Son in the kingdom of Christ).

(For information relative to “dispensations” and “ages,” refer to the author’s book, [The Study of Scripture BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/the-study-of-scripture.php), chapter 5, in this site.)

*Preparation* occurs today; *placement*, based upon preparation, will emanate out of issues and determinations made at the judgment seat, immediately preceding the time when the Father delivers the kingdom to His Son (*cf.* [Daniel 4:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.17&t=NKJV), [25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.25&t=NKJV), [32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.32&t=NKJV); [7:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.13-14&t=NKJV); [Matthew 20:20-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+20.20-23&t=NKJV)); and *positions* in the kingdom will be realized in the reign of Christ that follows (*cf.* [Matthew 25:19ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.19ff&t=NKJV); [Luke 19:15ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.15ff&t=NKJV); [Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV)).

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Chapter 2

**We Must All Appear**

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (*[*2 Corinthians 5:10*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10&t=NKJV)*)*

*Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,*

*and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.*

*His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;*

*His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;*

*He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. . . .*

*The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.* ([Revelation 1:12-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.12-16&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.20&t=NKJV))

Events of the judgment seat of Christ will occur at the end of the present dispensation, following the removal of the Church but preceding the beginning of the Tribulation. This is the revealed order of events as they are set forth in the first six chapters of the book of Revelation.

This, as well, is in complete keeping with the manner in which God deals with both Israel and the Church during Man’s Day — with one, then the other, though not both at the same time.

Christ is not judging today. Rather, He is ministering as “High Priest” in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of Christians. And He will not act in the capacity of “Judge” *until* He completes His present high priestly ministry, which will last throughout the present dispensation.

Thus, Christians will not be judged *until the present dispensation has run its course and Christ returns for His Church*. Once these things occur, the judgment of Christians will ensue; and this judgment must be completed prior to the time God turns back to and continues His dealings with Israel, completing the full number of years (490 years) determined upon the Jewish people and their city (Jerusalem) in Daniel’s Seventy-Week prophecy ([Daniel 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+9.24-27&t=NKJV)).

Christ as Judge

In [Revelation 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.13&t=NKJV), Christ is seen dressed in the type of garments worn by both *a priest* and *a judge*; but the position of the girdle about the chest rather than around the waist indicates that Christ, in this passage, is exercising *a judicial* rather than a priestly role.

A priest would be girded about the waist, signifying service; but the girdle placed about the shoulders or chest indicates a *magisterial* function (*cf*. [John 13:2-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.2-5&t=NKJV); [Revelation 15:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+15.6&t=NKJV)).

Aside from the preceding, the entire scene is *judicial*, not priestly. *Brass, fire*, and a *sword* are mentioned in connection with Christ’s appearance, which speak of *judicial activity*. And Christ’s countenance is described by the expression, “*the sun shining in its strength*,” which has to do with His glory, to be manifested during that coming day of His power ([Psalm 2:1-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.1-9&t=NKJV); [Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV)).

Then, more information is given, which will help to ascertain exactly what is being depicted by the scene at hand. The apostle John was transported into “*the Lord’s day* [the Day of the Lord]” ([Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV)), and the vision of Christ that he saw depicts Christ as He will appear following the completion of His high priestly work, *anticipating* His long-awaited regal work.

The entire scene in [Revelation 1:13-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.13-18&t=NKJV) is prophetic, depicting Christ *as Judge* *in the midst of the seven churches at the conclusion of the present dispensation, anticipating that coming day when He will exercise governmental power and authority over the earth*.

The chronological arrangement of events opening the book of Revelation sets forth the fact that God will deal with the Church in judgment *before* He deals with Israel and the nations after this fashion (*cf.* [1 Peter 4:17-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.17-19&t=NKJV)). The Church will be removed from the earth and placed in the heavens; and the Church will be dealt with during a period of time before the Tribulation begins on earth.

A review of the first five chapters of the book of Revelation reveals that there will have to be an interval of time between the removal of the Church and the beginning of the Tribulation. That is, the present dispensation will run its course, the Church will be removed, and certain events will then transpire in heaven (while the Church is in heaven) before the Tribulation begins on earth (which, when it begins, will fulfill seven uncompleted years of the previous dispensation).

These events — occurring while the Church is in heaven, preceding the beginning of the Tribulation on earth — concern *the Church coming under judgment* (as revealed in [Revelation 1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-3&t=NKJV)); and these events also concern *the relinquishment of crowns* that Christians will wear during the Messianic Era ([Revelation 4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4&t=NKJV)), along with *preparations to redeem the domain* over which Christians will rule at this time ([Revelation 5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5&t=NKJV)), as well as bringing about *the marriage of God’s Son to His bride* (a bride previously revealed at the judgment seat in [Revelation 1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-3&t=NKJV) [*ref.* [Ruth 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ruth+3&t=NKJV); [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ruth+4&t=NKJV)]).

(The event marking the beginning of the Tribulation on earth is not the removal of the Church, as is often taught, but the ratifying of a seven-year covenant between the man of sin and Israel. The Tribulation, following the ratifying of this covenant, will last exactly seven years, completing the full four hundred ninety years of Daniel’s prophecy concerning Seventy Sevens “determined” *upon the Jewish people and their “holy city”* [*cf*. [Daniel 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+9.24-27&t=NKJV)].

Also, for information pertaining to the marriage of God’s Son to His bride, refer to the author’s book, [The Time of the End BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-in-revelation.php#The%20Time%20of%20the%20End), Chapter 30, “[The Marriage Supper of the Lamb](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-in-revelation.php#The%20Marriage%20Supper%20of%20the%20Lamb),” in this site.)

Material in the book of Revelation has been arranged in a three-fold manner, and this arrangement is given at the beginning of the book, in the first chapter:

*Write the things that you have seen, and the things that are, and the things that will take place after this.* ([Revelation 1:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.19&t=NKJV))

The “*things that you have seen*” refer to the things concerning Christ in the verses immediately preceding verse nineteen, in chapter one (*cf.* [Revelation 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.12&t=NKJV)).

The “*things that are*” refer to things concerning the seven churches in chapters two and three, which depict the Church in a two-fold respect:

1) The Church during the present dispensation, showing a history of the Church throughout the dispensation.

2) More specifically these chapters reveal the Church at the end of the dispensation (in the Lord’s Day [[Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV)]), showing the Church coming under Judgment (continuing from chapter one [note that John was relating “*the things that are”* from the perspective of a future time, in the Lord’s Day, not from the perspective of his own time and day — about. 90 A.D., during Man’s Day — though it is evident that these two chapters drop back and have to do with the Church throughout the whole of the dispensation as well]).

And the “*things that will take place after this*” refer to things not only beyond the present dispensation but beyond that time when the Church is judged ([Revelation 1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-3&t=NKJV)). And this section of the book, though having its own divisions, continues from the beginning of chapter four throughout the remainder of the book.

The word translated “*after this*” in [Revelation 1:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.19&t=NKJV) and the words translated “*after these*” and “*after this*” in [Revelation 4:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1&t=NKJV) are from the same two words in the Greek text (*meta tauta*). In all three instances the translation should be, “after these things.” The thought, as shown at the beginning of chapter four, is after the things revealed in chapters two and three.

In one respect (time-wise), this would be a reference to events following the present dispensation (one way in which chapters 2 & 3 are to be viewed); but, more specifically, the reference would be to events following findings and determinations emanating out of activity at the judgment seat (the primary thrust of chapters 2 & 3).

The seven churches in the presence of Christ in Revelation chapter one depict *the Church as a whole coming under judgment at the conclusion of the present dispensation*; and the fact that this judgment will occur in heaven and has to do with issues surrounding the judgment seat of Christ becomes evident as one studies the opening chapters of this book.

“Seven” in Scripture is *God’s number*. It is a number showing *completion*. It is used more specifically to show *the completion of that which is in view*, and in this case, the Church is in view, with “seven churches” showing *the complete Church* (all Christians, faithful and unfaithful alike).

The seven churches named in the opening chapters of the book of Revelation, though referring to seven existing churches in the Gentile world during the first century (in Asia [[Revelation 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.4&t=NKJV)]), depict *completion in relation to the Church*. These seven churches represent Christianity *as a whole* — both on earth during the present dispensation ([Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)) and in heaven at the conclusion of the dispensation ([Revelation 1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-4&t=NKJV), as a whole).

Chapter one introduces the matter at hand, (judgment awaiting *all Christians*); [Revelation 2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2-4&t=NKJV) then form a commentary on chapter one; and [Revelation 5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5&t=NKJV) leads into that section of the book covering the Tribulation, which begins in [Revelation 6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6&t=NKJV).

(Note: When studying the book of Revelation, look for the book’s own built-in interpretation, as in chapters one through four. A unit of truth will be given; then, following Scriptures provide commentary upon this unit of truth, allowing the Holy Spirit Himself to interpret that which He gave through John (*e.g.*, *cf*. [Revelation 12:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.1-6&t=NKJV) and [Revelation 12:7-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.7-17&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Revelation 12:1-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.1-17&t=NKJV) and [Revelation 13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13&t=NKJV); [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Revelation 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.3&t=NKJV); [13:1-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.1-18&t=NKJV); [17:1-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17.1-7&t=NKJV) and [Revelation 17:8-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17.8-18&t=NKJV).)

The trumpet beckoning to John in [Revelation 4:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1&t=NKJV) can only be synonymous with the trumpet in [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV). In this respect — because of the revealed events that follow in each instance — the trumpet in these two sections is evidently the trumpet that will be heard when the Church is removed from the earth at the end of this dispensation, subsequently appearing in the presence of Christ to be judged, as revealed in chapters one through three (*cf.* [1 Corinthians 15:52](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.52&t=NKJV); [1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.16-5.9&t=NKJV)). Then, a sequence of events, revealed throughout the remainder of the book, begins to unfold.

John, transported into the Lord’s Day, at a future time, in chapter one, was instructed to record that which he saw and send the record to seven existing churches in Asia. These churches, along with a brief description of each, are seen on earth in chapters two and three; but the scene back in chapter one, as well, has them in the presence of Christ in heaven, at the end of the dispensation, about to come under judgment.

An overcomer’s promise is listed for each church in chapters two and three, and in chapter one the churches are seen as they are about to be judged relative to these overcomer’s promises. Chapters two and three not only furnish the background material to show *why* and *on what basis* the judgment set forth in chapter one will occur, but these chapters actually *have to do with that judgment*.

Note the structure of each of the seven epistles to the seven churches. All seven are structured exactly the same way:

1) I know your works.

2) Judgment is then seen to be on the basis of these works.

3) And this judgment is with a view to showing whether the Christian has overcome or has been overcome (there is an overcomer’s promise concluding each epistle, and these overcomer’s promises are millennial in their scope of fulfillment).

Christians will be judged on the basis of works, with a view to showing whether they have overcome or have been overcome; and this will be with a view to their realizing or being denied regal promises and blessing in the Messianic Era that follows.

As previously seen, John’s experience of being transported into the Lord’s Day in chapter one is synonymous with his being removed from the earth at the beginning of chapter four. Thus, events about to be revealed in chapter four begin at exactly the same place events in the previous three chapters began — with the removal of the Church to be judged. But this judgment is not repeated in chapter four. Rather, events surrounding the judgment seat shift to related events that will immediately follow this judgment.

The scene in heaven throughout chapter four provides additional details concerning the seven churches in the presence of Christ in chapter one. All Christians, comprising the complete Church in the presence of Christ in that future day, will not only see that which John saw in chapter one, experience that which is depicted in chapters two and three, but also see that which John saw in chapter four (along with, it would appear, the things that John saw in the remaining chapters of the book as well).

(For additional details pertaining to the first four chapters of the book of Revelation, refer to the author’s books, [The Time of the End BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-in-revelation.php#The%20Time%20of%20the%20End), Chapters 1-6, in this site.)

By way of summation, to grasp exactly what is being taught in these opening chapters of the book of Revelation, keep two things in mind:

1. The main tenor of thought throughout these chapters is “*judgment*,” first upon the Church and then upon Israel and the nations. The book begins with events occurring in that future day when the Church will come into judgment after being removed from the earth, and the book then leads into the judgments of the Tribulation that are to come upon the earth-dwellers. These things (affecting the Church, Israel, and the nations) will come to pass at the conclusion of the present dispensation, preceding the Messianic Era.

2. All *seven* churches are seen in Christ’s presence during this time, even the lukewarm, naked church of Laodicea that had shut Christ on the outside ([Revelation 1:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.12-13&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.20&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Revelation 3:14-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.14-21&t=NKJV)). The seven churches, denoting *completeness* both upon the earth ([Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)) and in heaven ([Revelation 1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-3&t=NKJV)), reveal that *every Christian will be removed from the earth at the termination of the present dispensation to appear before Christ in judgment.*

This is completely in line with any Scriptural teaching on the subject. The widespread teaching that either all or part of the Church will remain on earth during the Tribulation has no basis whatsoever in Scripture. The Scriptures teach, unequivocally, that *the complete Church* — all of the saved from the entire 2,000-year dispensation — will be removed before the Tribulation begins; and that *the complete Church* will, at this time, appear before the judgment seat of Christ in heaven — a judgment that, as previously seen, will be completed before the Tribulation even begins on earth.

Removal of the Church to be Judged

Aside from the opening chapters of the book of Revelation, scriptural warrant for both the removal of the Church before the Tribulation and the fact that all Christians — faithful and unfaithful alike — will be removed at this time is not difficult at all to find. Teachings of this nature can be found beginning with the Old Testament types. And the Old Testament types must not only agree with one another but they must also agree with the New Testament antitype. All must parallel one another and be in perfect agreement.

(For additional material on the rapture, refer to the author’s book, [The Time of the End BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-in-revelation.php#The%20Time%20of%20the%20End), Chapters 4, 5, “In the Lord’s Day,” Parts 1, 2, in this site.)

1) The Old Testament Types

The three main Old Testament types dealing with the removal of Christians from the earth at the end of the dispensation, commonly referred to as *the rapture*, can be found in the opening book of Scripture, the book of Genesis. The first is seen in the experiences of *Enoch*, the second in the experiences of *Lot and his family*, and the third in the experiences of *Rebekah*. And each of these three types present different facets of the same picture, together forming an Old Testament composite word-picture of the rapture.

A) Enoch

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, is seen being removed from the earth between two points in time — *following a blood sacrifice, prior to the Flood* — at the end of the seventh generation, at the end of a complete period of time (“seven,” *a number showing completeness*). This points to those whom Enoch typifies (Christians) being removed from the earth at a time following that which Abel’s death typifies (Christ’s death) but preceding that which the Flood typifies (the coming Tribulation), which occurs during Noah’s day, the tenth from Adam (events in connection with *a subsequent complete period of time* [“ten” is *a number showing completion as well*]).

Thus, both the participants and the timing of the rapture are introduced in the foundational type. The rapture, according to this type can only have to do with *those of the present dispensation* (with Christians). It cannot pertain to any other than the ones who have appropriated the blood of the One dying in the antitype of Abel’s death. And it has to occur *preceding that time typified by the Flood during Noah’s day.*

(Some individuals move beyond that which is revealed in [Genesis 4-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+4-8&t=NKJV) or [Hebrews 11:4-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.4-7&t=NKJV) and attempt to teach a selective removal of Christians by and using this overall, foundational type. A teaching of this nature is derived by viewing Enoch’s removal from the earth as being conditioned upon his faithfulness. Using the type after this fashion forms a beginning point that individuals often use to teach that only faithful Christians will be removed at the time of the rapture [the faithful among the dead in Christ raised and removed with the faithful who are alive at that time].

This though is an improper way to view that part of the type under discussion — *the dispensational aspect of the overall type*. There is *a dispensational scheme* of things seen through that which is set forth in both [Genesis 4-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+4-8&t=NKJV) and [Hebrews 11:4-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.4-7&t=NKJV), but the central teaching surrounding “faith” is *really not part of this dispensational scheme per se*. Rather, the central teaching surrounding “faith,” contextually, has to do with the salvation of the soul [[Hebrews 10:35ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.35ff&t=NKJV)]. And to bring “faith” from this central teaching over into this dispensational structure and attempt to teach a selective removal of Christians on this basis is clearly incorrect.

First, note what viewing matters after this fashion would do to the next type in the light of the antitype — Noah and his family going through the Flood, typifying Israel going through the coming Tribulation. This would necessitate Israel, in the antitype, exercising faith prior to the Tribulation and being delivered by acting in accordance with that faith [as Noah exercised faith prior to the Flood and was delivered by acting in accordance with his faith]. But exercising faith after this fashion will not be true of Israel during the Tribulation at all. Israel will not exercise faith until *the end of the Tribulation*, following the Jewish people looking upon the One whom they pierced.

Then, viewing the matter from another perspective, subsequent types clearly reveal that all Christians (faithful and unfaithful alike) will be removed at the time of the rapture. If the foundational type shows a selective rapture of faithful Christians alone, so must any subsequent type that deals with this aspect of the rapture. And the antitype, dealing with this same aspect of the rapture, must show a selective rapture as well.

But, when one turns to Scripture alone, the preceding is not seen to be the case at all. Something other than a selective rapture of the faithful is clearly seen in subsequent types. And the antitype must deal with the matter after the same fashion as it is dealt with in the type, which it does.)

The foundational type in [Genesis 4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+4&t=NKJV) deals centrally with *the participants and the timing* of the rapture (*Christians*, and *a* *pretribulational* *event*). It has *nothing* to do with a selective or nonselective rapture. Different types contain different facets of information, and *subsequent types deal with the all-inclusive nature of the rapture, along with the antitype*.

B) Lot and His Family

Lot, his wife, and his two virgin daughters were removed from Sodom prior to the destruction of the cities of the plain. And the manner in which the New Testament handles this event leaves no room to question that which is in view from a typical standpoint. The destruction of the cities of the plain can point only to the coming destruction of this present world system, and the removal of Lot and part of his family can only point to a removal of certain individuals from this world (from the earth) prior to this destruction (a destruction occurring during and immediately following the Tribulation).

This account forms a subsequent type of that which is previously seen in [Genesis 5-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+5-8&t=NKJV), and the account is dealt with in the New Testament in a parallel manner. The destruction of the cities of the plain during Lot’s day is dealt with in the New Testament alongside the destruction produced by the Flood during Noah’s day, introducing a parallel type. Both destructions in the two types point to the same destruction in the antitype.

*And as it was in the days of Noah . . .*

*Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot . . .*

*Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.* ([Luke 17:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+17.26&t=NKJV), [28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+17.28&t=NKJV), [30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+17.30&t=NKJV) [26a, 28a]).

Then Christ — relating the accounts of these two destructions occurring in history, which point to the same destruction in prophecy — sounded two main warnings. And the warnings were directed to two groups of people — to Israel, and to the Church (about to be brought into existence).

The account surrounding Noah and the Flood was given first ([Luke 17:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+17.26&t=NKJV)). And, accordingly, Christ sounded the warning *to Israel* in connection with this type first ([Luke 17:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+17.31&t=NKJV)). Noah and the Flood, not Enoch and his removal from the earth, are in view; and the matter has to do with those typified by Noah going through the Flood — Israel going through the Tribulation.

The same statement, comprising the warning, is later seen within a more lengthy warning that Christ provided in the Olivet Discourse. Christ, in this discourse, warned the Jewish people to flee for their lives when they saw a particular man (Antichrist) do certain things during this coming time of destruction ([Matthew 24:15ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.15ff&t=NKJV)).

Immediately following the warning that had to do with the days of Noah, Christ sounded a warning that had to do with the days of Lot ([Luke 17:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+17.28&t=NKJV)). Rather than dealing with individuals going through a time of destruction, the days of Lot had to do with *individuals removed prior to this destruction*. And the warning that Christ sounded was in connection with Lot’s wife and the salvation or loss of one’s soul.

*Remember Lot’s wife.*

*Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life* [soul] *will preserve it.* ([Luke 17:32-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+17.32-33&t=NKJV))

Lot’s wife, along with her husband and two virgin daughters, was delivered from Sodom. And, though delivered from Sodom, she lost her soul. She looked back toward Sodom rather than out ahead toward the mountain to which Lot had been told to flee ([Genesis 19:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.17&t=NKJV), [26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.26&t=NKJV); [Luke 9:62](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+9.62&t=NKJV)).

Lot, in similar fashion, failed to realize the salvation of his soul as well. Lot is contrasted with Abraham; and though Lot later found himself on *the mountain* to which he had been told to flee, his portion on the mount was diametrically opposed to that of Abraham.

(A “*mountain*” in Scripture symbolizes a kingdom [*cf.* [Isaiah 2:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+2.2-4&t=NKJV); [Daniel 2:35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.35&t=NKJV), [44-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.44-45&t=NKJV); [Matthew 16:28-17:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.28-17.5&t=NKJV)]).

Lot found himself dwelling on *the mountain*, but in a cave on the mountain, in a place *separated from the Lord* ([Genesis 19:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.30&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Matthew 22:10-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.10-14&t=NKJV)). Abraham, on the other hand, found himself also dwelling in the high country, but *standing before the Lord* — a place where, unlike Lot, he had been both dwelling and standing for quite sometime ([Genesis 19:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.27&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Genesis 18:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+18.22&t=NKJV)).

The account of Lot and certain members of his family being delivered from Sodom adds additional information to the type surrounding Enoch in [Genesis 4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+4&t=NKJV). This second type makes it quite clear that faithfulness or unfaithfulness of Christians and the consequent salvation or loss of the soul have nothing to do with the rapture itself. These are issues that will come into view *following* the rapture, as seen in God’s dealings with both Lot’s wife and Lot *following* their deliverance from Sodom. These are issues that will come into view following the rapture, as seen in God’s dealings with both Lot’s wife and Lot following their deliverance from Sodom. These are issues that have to do with the judgment seat *following* the rapture, not issues that have to do with the rapture.

C) Rebekah

Then there is a subsequent type that deals with the matter from a different perspective yet, building upon that which is revealed in the previous types and providing additional information. And that type is found in [Genesis 24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24&t=NKJV).

This chapter in Genesis relates the story of Abraham sending his eldest servant into Mesopotamia to procure a bride for his son, Isaac. This chapter is the fourth of five consecutive chapters in Genesis ([Genesis 21-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+21-25&t=NKJV)) that form one overall type consisting of numerous individual types. And within the complete typology seen in these chapters, God has set forth exactly the same thing seen in previous chapters ([Genesis 4-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+4-8&t=NKJV)) — a dispensational framework of events surrounding Christ, Israel, and the Church.

Throughout these chapters, “Abraham” is seen as a type of *God the Father*, “Isaac” a type of *God the Son*, and “Sarah” (Abraham’s wife) a type of *Israel* (the wife of Jehovah). “Abraham’s servant” sent into Mesopotamia in [Genesis 24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24&t=NKJV) is seen as a type of *the Holy Spirit* sent into the world; and “Keturah” in [Genesis 25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25&t=NKJV) (who Abraham married following events in chapter 24) is also, as Sarah (in [Genesis 23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+23&t=NKJV)), seen as a type of *Israe*l, though within another frame of reference than Sarah.

Typology after the preceding fashion becomes evident as one works his way through these chapters.

Isaac’s birth in [Genesis 21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+21&t=NKJV) was via supernatural means, typifying Christ’s subsequent birth through the same supernatural means. The offering of Isaac by his father in a designated place in the land of Moriah in [Genesis 22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22&t=NKJV) typifies the subsequent offering of Christ by His Father in a designated place in the same land. Abraham’s wife, Sarah, dying in [Genesis 23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+23&t=NKJV) (following the offering of the son) typifies God’s wife, Israel, subsequently being set aside (following the offering of the Son). And Israel, as Sarah, is looked upon during this time as being in the place of death ([Jonah 1:17ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jonah+1.17ff&t=NKJV); [John 11:6ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+11.6ff&t=NKJV)).

Next in the dispensational structure and overall type are events in [Genesis 24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24&t=NKJV), where the search for and procurement of the bride is seen prior to Abraham’s remarriage in the following chapter. Chapter twenty-four details the work of the Holy Spirit in the world today, searching for the bride, following Israel being set aside ([Genesis 23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+23&t=NKJV)). And this search will occur and be completed before the time God resumes His dealings with and restores Israel ([Genesis 25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25&t=NKJV)).

In the past, Israel, as Sarah, was barren ([Genesis 16:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+16.1-2&t=NKJV)). And because of Sarah’s barrenness, Isaac’s birth required God’s supernatural intervention. But when Israel is one day restored, typified by Abraham marrying Keturah in chapter twenty-five, conditions will be reversed. Keturah bore Abraham six sons ([Genesis 25:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25.1-2&t=NKJV)). Keturah was very fruitful, as Israel will be during that coming day after the nation has been restored.

It is between these two dispensational points (Israel being set aside [[Genesis 23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+23&t=NKJV)] and Israel subsequently being restored [[Genesis 25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25&t=NKJV)]) that God procures a bride in the antitype for His Son, Jesus. And as Abraham sent his eldest servant into Mesopotamia to search for and procure a bride for his son, God has sent the Holy Spirit into the world to search for and procure a bride for His Son.

Thus, within the dispensational structure of the things which are seen throughout Genesis chapters twenty-one through twenty-five, there can be no question concerning that which is involved in the typology of chapter twenty-four. This chapter has to do with the mission of the Holy Spirit in the world during the present dispensation — searching for and procuring a bride for God’s Son.

The servant arrived in Mesopotamia with “ten camels” laden with his master’s goods. “Ten” is the number of *ordinal completion, showing all of the master’s goods* ([Genesis 24:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.10&t=NKJV)), and the master had given all these goods to his son ([Genesis 24:36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.36&t=NKJV); [25:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25.5&t=NKJV)). The servant was to show the prospective bride, from Abraham’s family, *all the glories that the father had given to his son*. Then the invitation to become the wife of Abraham’s son was to be extended ([Genesis 24:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.3-4&t=NKJV), [53](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.53&t=NKJV), [57-58](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.57-58&t=NKJV)).

This points to that which is occurring during the present dispensation. The Holy Spirit is in the world showing those from God’s family (Christians) *all the glories that the Father has given to His Son*. And He is doing this by and through opening the Word to their understanding, revealing these things to them. Then, as in the type, the invitation is extended to Christians to become the wife of God’s Son.

Rebekah, in the type, said that she would go ([Genesis 24:57-58](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.57-58&t=NKJV)). And once the purpose for the servant’s mission had been accomplished, he removed Rebekah from Mesopotamia ([Genesis 24:59ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.59ff&t=NKJV)).

In the antitype, exactly the same thing will occur. Once the purpose for the Holy Spirit’s mission has been accomplished, He will remove the bride from the world. And the manner in which Isaac’s bride was removed, along with that which followed, forms the pattern for the manner in which Christ’s bride will be removed, along with that which will follow.

Abraham’s servant removed the bride on camels, and the bride was accompanied by damsels. *All of them together rode on the camels, and they all went forth together to meet Isaac.*

Though the number of the camels at the time of the departure is not stated, the inference would clearly point to *ten camels*. The servant entered the land with “ten camels” to search for the bride, and the reference to camels upon his departure with the bride would clearly point to the same *ten camels*.

Rebekah and her damsels leaving on the camels show *ordinal completion* once again. *All went forth to meet Isaac*, but *only Rebekah* was later presented to Isaac as his bride for whom the servant had searched. Rebekah was the one seen putting on *her veil* when she and the damsels accompanying her came into the son’s presence, typifying *the wedding garment* to be worn by Christ’s bride when Christians find themselves in the Son’s presence.

As *they all went forth* to meet Isaac in the type, so will *they all go forth* to meet Christ in the antitype. And, as *a distinction* was made between Rebekah and the damsels accompanying her in the type, so will it be in the antitype.

Rebekah was the one who had responded positively to the servant’s mission in Mesopotamia; and she was the one who, following her removal from Mesopotamia, was *separated* from the other damsels and presented to Isaac as his bride.

In like manner, those Christians forming Christ’s bride will be the ones who respond *positively* to the Holy Spirit’s mission in the world; and they will be the ones who, following their removal from the earth, will be *separated* from other Christians and presented to Christ as His bride.

2) The New Testament Antitype

There are not really that many verses in Scripture (Old or New Testament) that pertain to the rapture *per se*. Scripture, dealing with Christians, centers on two main areas:

1) With issues surrounding faithfulness or unfaithfulness during the present time, preceding the rapture.

2) With issues surrounding the results of one’s faithfulness or unfaithfulness, following the rapture. Scripture provides a great deal of information in both realms; but, from a comparative standpoint, Scripture does not present that much information concerning the rapture itself.

The rapture though, as has been demonstrated, is dealt with in several of the types. And the existence of the types demands the existence of an antitype. An individual could really go to only two places in the New Testament to view the rapture in connection with the events set forth in the three Old Testament types under consideration — [Revelation 1:10-4:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10-4.11&t=NKJV) and [1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.13-5.10&t=NKJV) (though the rapture is presented in [1 Corinthians 15:51-57](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.51-57&t=NKJV), details surrounding the events seen in the types are not presented here).

Each of these two sections provides information peculiar to the passage, but only one provides the complete sequence seen through comparing the types — [Revelation 1:10-4:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10-4.11&t=NKJV). [1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.13-5.10&t=NKJV) provides everything except a reference to the Tribulation. And since this is provided in the context of [Revelation 1:10-4:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10-4.11&t=NKJV) (chapters 5ff), this section of Scripture will be used to show the antitype, with reference back to [1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.13-5.10&t=NKJV).

It is sometimes stated that there is no place in Scripture that shows the sequence of events having to do with all Christians being removed preceding the tribulation. But that’s not true at all. This is seen in the Old Testament types, and this is also seen in the New Testament antitype as well.

Again, the only possible way to properly deal with the rapture from the standpoint of Scripture is to call attention to the matter *after the fashion in which God has set it forth*. One simply calls attention to the types and the antitype, leaving the matter to rest upon the foundation of Scripture itself.

A) Christians in the Lord’s Day

John, in the book of Revelation, was taken to the Isle of Patmos and then transported into the Lord’s Day (or Day of the Lord), at a future time ([Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV); [4:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-2&t=NKJV)). And, in this future time, in the Lord’s Day, John was told to record that which he was being allowed to see ([Revelation 1:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.19&t=NKJV)), which dealt first with events surrounding the Church in Christ’s presence in heaven ([Revelation 1:10-4:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10-4.11&t=NKJV)), then with events surrounding Israel and the nations on earth ([Revelation 5:1-19:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.1-19.21&t=NKJV)).

The Lord’s Day follows Man’s Day in relation to man on the earth, whether for the Church or for Israel and the nations. Once Man’s Day has been allowed to run its course, or once man has been removed from the earth during Man’s Day (as John being removed from the Isle of Patmos, or the removal of Christians from the earth at the end of the dispensation), the Lord’s Day begins for man at that time.

That is, the Lord’s Day *will begin on earth* at the end of Man’s Day; and the Lord’s Day *can begin for a segment of mankind* prior to that time by and through man being removed from the earth, removed from Man’s Day on the earth. Thus, the Lord’s Day will begin at least seven years earlier for the Church (removed from the earth) than it will for Israel and the nations (remaining on the earth).

(Matters surrounding Man’s Day and the Lord’s Day in relation to the preceding are dealt with more fully in Chapters 4, 5 of the author’s book, [The Time of the End BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-in-revelation.php#The%20Time%20of%20the%20End).)

Christians removed from the earth preceding the seven-year Tribulation will no longer be living in Man’s Day. “Man’s Day” has to do with *man upon the earth during an allotted 6,000 years of time* (with the foundation upon which the whole of the matter rests seen in the six and seven days of [Genesis 1:1-2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-2.3&t=NKJV)).

Christians, at the time of the rapture, will be removed from Man’s Day and transported into the Lord’s Day. That, as previously shown, is what is seen through John being transported into the Lord’s Day in [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV) and seeing seven churches in Christ’s presence, in heaven, in that future day.

This is also what is seen in [1 Thessalonians 5:2ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.2ff&t=NKJV), following the removal of the Church into the heavens ([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.13-18&t=NKJV)). A removal of the Church into that future day will overtake many Christians “*as a thief in the night*,” though this will not be true for other Christians ([1 Thessalonians 5:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.2-4&t=NKJV); *cf*. [2 Peter 3:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.10-11&t=NKJV)).

Christians in the Lord’s Day, in connection with either *faithfulness* or *unfaithfulness*, resulting in either *salvation* or *wrath*, is the subject at hand in [1 Thessalonians 5:1-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.1-9&t=NKJV). And this is the same subject set forth in the opening chapter of the book of Revelation (in conjunction with that which is revealed in chapters 2 & 3), though seen from a different perspective.

(As previously seen, the rapture of the Church in the book of Revelation is set forth in *John’s experience* [removed from earth into heaven, into the Lord’s Day in [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV), with the same event repeated in [Revelation 4:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-2&t=NKJV)].

If, as taught by some Christians, the rapture of the Church is not seen in John’s experience in these opening chapters of the book, then the rapture itself is not dealt with in this book. But, even if the preceding were correct, which it isn’t, the rapture would still have to occur at the time of or preceding John’s experience, for John, immediately following, saw *the complete Church in Christ’s presence, in heaven, in the Lord’s Day*.

Thus, relative to *the timing of the rapture*, whether or not the rapture is to be seen in John’s experience would be immaterial. *Contextually, it would still be pretributional*. As well, the rapture is plainly shown in a companion passage [[1 Thessalonians 4:13-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.13-17&t=NKJV)] *to precede the same mention of Christians in the Lord’s Day as seen in* [*Revelation 1:10-20*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10-20&t=NKJV) [*cf*. [1 Thessalonians 5:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.2-4&t=NKJV)].)

B) Christians in Christ’s Presence

Thus, as clearly stated in the opening chapter of the book of Revelation, this book begins with Christians in Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Day, at a future time. And two things are seen in this chapter relative to Christians in that future day:

1) *All Christians will be present, together, at the same time and place.*

2) *All Christians will appear before Christ at this time to be judged.*

*The complete Church* is seen in Christ’s presence at this time, shown by the number “seven” — shown by all seven churches from chapters two and three appearing in Christ’s presence at the same time ([Revelation 1:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.12-13&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.20&t=NKJV)).

Not only is the church in Ephesus seen in Christ’s presence (the church that left its first love), but the church in Laodicea is seen there as well (comprised of “lukewarm” Christians, of whom Christ said, “*I will vomit you out of my mouth*” [[Revelation 3:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.16&t=NKJV)]). *All Christians* — shown by seven churches, seen together in Christ’s presence — will be there, *awaiting judgment*.

Or, perhaps it would be better to draw the contrast between the Philadelphian and Laodicean churches. *All Christians* represented by both will be there, along with *all Christians* represented by the other five churches. *All Christians* — shown by seven churches seen together in Christ’s presence — will be there, *awaiting judgment*.

A separation of Christians on the basis of faithfulness occurs in Christ’s presence alone, at the judgment seat. *Scripture knows nothing of a separation of this nature occurring at the time of the rapture.*

And all Christians will appear in Christ’s presence to be judged in this manner preceding the search for One worthy to break the seals of the seven-sealed scroll ([Revelation 5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5&t=NKJV)). Only when these seals begin to be broken will the judgments of the Tribulation begin ([Revelation 6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6&t=NKJV)).

Thus, the antitype, in complete accord with the types, presents the rapture as both *all-inclusive* and *pretribulational*. *All Christians will be removed together, at the same time; and this will occur preceding the Tribulation.*

This is simply what Scripture has to say about the matter, viewing the types and then going to the antitype. What man may have to say is of no moment at all. *Scripture alone contains the correct, necessary information to properly address the issue at hand. And that is where the matter must be left.*

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Chapter 3

**That Every One May Receive**

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

*Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men* . . . . ([2 Corinthians 5:10-11a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10-11a&t=NKJV)).

Decisions and determinations emanating from findings at the judgment seat, according to Scripture (*cf*. [Matthew 12:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.30&t=NKJV); [25:19-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.19-30&t=NKJV); [Luke 19:15-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.15-26&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 5:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.9-11&t=NKJV)), will fall into two categories:

*“Well done, good and faithful servant . . . .”*

*“You wicked and lazy servant . . . .”*

The fact that “*a just reward* ([Hebrews 2:2 KJV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.2&t=KJV): ‘*a just recompense*’)” — *exact payment for services rendered* — will be meted out to every individual is set forth in Scripture in a number of different places through a number of different means (types, parables, metaphors, direct statements).

Beginning with the writings of Moses in the book of Genesis and terminating with the writings of John in the book of Revelation, Scripture is *replete with information concerning exactly what the future holds for all Christians; and there is no excuse for any Christian with an open Bible set before him to be other than knowledgeable concerning these things*.

Each Christian, individually, will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to “*receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*.” The specific statement is made that Christians will be judged solely on the basis of that which *they themselves have done*, which will be a judgment *solely on the basis of works*.

*Each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by* [in] *fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.* ([1 Corinthians 3:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.13&t=NKJV)).

The works of Christians that will be tried “*by* [in] *fire*” in that coming day will, according to Scripture, fall into two central categories: “*gold, silver, precious stones*,” and “*wood, hay, straw*” ([1 Corinthians 3:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.12&t=NKJV)). And every Christian will receive “*a just reward* (KJV: ‘*a just recompense*,’)” *completely commensurate with that revealed by his works.*

Reason for Judgment

There are two major events in Scripture, common to all Christians, with which *every Christian should be intimately familiar*.

One event is *that past moment* when the individual became a Christian by and through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The other event is *that future moment* when the same individual will be removed from the earth to appear before the Lord in judgment.

A Christian’s presently possessed salvation in no way prepares him for that which will occur at the judgment seat. Becoming a Christian only places the individual in a position where *he can appear at this judgment.*

Otherwise, he would appear at the great white throne judgment, with the unsaved dead from throughout Man’s Day ([Revelation 20:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.11-15&t=NKJV)).

Issues of the judgment seat of Christ will occur *before the Millennium*, and issues of the great white throne judgment will occur *after the Millennium*. Issues of the judgment seat of Christ must occur before the Millennium for the simple reason that *these issues will involve the Millennium itself*. Such will not be the case with judgment to be executed at the great white throne. *Issues of this judgment will involve only the eternal ages beyond the Millennium*. Thus, the judgment seat of Christ finds its place in Scripture *preceding the Millennium*, and the great white throne judgment finds its place in Scripture *following the Millennium.*

The Church was brought into existence to be the recipient of that part of the kingdom that Israel rejected, *the kingdom of the heavens*; and the Church must appear in judgment, with the kingdom of the heavens in view, preceding the time Christ takes the kingdom.

The primary purpose for the judgment seat of Christ is to reveal, by and through a testing “*by* [in] *fire*,” each Christian’s qualifications for occupying one of the numerous proffered positions as a co-heir with Christ in the kingdom. Emanating out of this revelation through testing will be *a just reward* (KJV: *recompense*) — each individual receiving exactly what he deserves, either *receiving rewards* commensurate with his service or *suffering loss* commensurate with his failure to serve.

Christians, at the judgment seat, will be shown to be either *qualified* or *disqualified* to occupy positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom. And every Christian will either *enter into and occupy one of these positions or be denied one of these positions.*

Issues surrounding the judgment seat will involve the activities of two dispensations — the present dispensation, and the coming dispensation. The present dispensation is one filled with trials, testing, and preparation; and issues of the judgment seat will be based entirely upon Christian involvement in these activities, with a view to the coming dispensation. Then, in the coming dispensation, the Messianic Era, findings and determinations previously made at the judgment seat will be brought to pass.

In the coming dispensation, every Christian will find himself in one of two positions. He will either occupy a position of *honor and glory*, or he will occupy a position of *shame and disgrace*. And there will be no equality among Christians in either position, for there will have previously been *a just reward* (recompense) at the judgment seat.

There will be a reaping in accord with the sowing. Every Christian will “*receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*.” This is the reason why some Christians will occupy higher positions in the kingdom than other Christians. And this is also the reason why, while some Christians will be given territorial authority, other Christians will be denied any authority at all (*cf.* [Matthew 25:14-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.14-30&t=NKJV); [Luke 19:12-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.12-27&t=NKJV)).

The Bema

The words, “*judgment seat,*” are a translation of the Greek word *bema*. This word refers to an elevated platform upon which the chair of a magistrate rested. This was the recognized place of magisterial authority; and the person occupying this chair issued decrees, judgments, etc. relative to the matter at hand.

Some expositors have sought to understand the word *bema* in the sense that it was used in connection with the ancient Grecian athletic games in Athens. At these games, the *bema* was a raised platform upon which the president or the umpire sat; and the victorious participants would appear before the bema, at the conclusion of the contests, to be rewarded. At these games, there was no thought of judicial activity in connection with the bema, only rewards; and this use of the word has led many Christians to view the *bema* of Christ within the same framework — a rewarding stand, apart from judicial activity.

However, the word *bema* is used a number of times in the New Testament in quite a different sense, and Scripture *must first and foremost* be understood in the light of other Scripture. The use of words in contemporary sources outside the Scriptures can, at times, provide added light on definitions, meanings, etc.; and this could extend into the way in which the word *bema* was used in connection with the athletic games in Athens. But the use of this word in connection with these games shows only one facet of the way in which the word is to be understood. New Testament references show other facets, which are quite different.

In many instances, rewards will emanate from findings at the judgment seat. Every man’s work will be tried “*by* [in] *fire*.” The race will have been run (the present “race of the faith”), judgment will follow, and only then will rewards come into the picture. The Grecian athletic games had only the contests and rewards in view, with no thought of judicial activity in connection with loss following the various contests. The use of the word *bema* in this respect shows only a portion of one side of the judgment seat.

Victorious and non-victorious runners alike will appear before the judgment seat of Christ: “*For we must ALL appear* . . . .” This was not true at the Grecian athletic games. Only the victorious participants appeared before the bema at these games. But all Christians will appear before Christ’s bema, judgment will be executed, and, as previously seen, a just reward (recompense) will result in every Christian receiving “*the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad* “ ([2 Corinthians 5:10b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10b&t=NKJV)).

Despite the previous differences, in [1 Corinthians 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-27&t=NKJV), Paul likened himself to a contestant in the games of that day, though one with an entirely different purpose and goal in view. A contestant in the games conditioned himself *physically*, with his ultimate goal being the reception of a *corruptible crown*; but Paul, as a contestant in the race of the faith, conditioned himself *spiritually*, with his ultimate goal being the reception of an *incorruptible crown*.

The thought in both contests is straining every muscle of one’s being as the contestant moves toward the goal.

(The word translated “*striveth* — NKJV: ‘*competes*’ — [[1 Corinthians 9:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.25&t=NKJV)]” is from *agonizomai* in the Greek text. This is the word from which the English word “agonize” is derived. Note [Luke 13:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+13.24&t=NKJV) where the same word is translated “strive”; note also the intensified form of this same word [*epagonizomai*], translated “*earnestly contend*,” in [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV).)

Paul knew that he would appear before Christ’s *bema* at the termination of the contest, as a runner either *approved* for an incorruptible crown or *disapproved* for this crown (in [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.27&t=NKJV) the word “castaway” in the KJV and “disqualified” in the NKJV [Greek: *adokimos*] should be translated “disapproved”).

At that time, *approval* will result in the person subsequently being crowned (after Christ receives the kingdom and returns [*cf*. [Daniel 7:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.13&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.14&t=NKJV); [Revelation 19:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11ff&t=NKJV)]), and *disapproval* will result in the crown subsequently being denied. The contestant who fails in the race of the faith will also “*suffer loss*” at this time (*cf*. [1 Corinthians 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.15&t=NKJV)).

The word *bema* is only used twice in the New Testament relative to the judgment seat of Christ ([Romans 14:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+14.10&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10&t=NKJV)). The reference in [Romans 14:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+14.10&t=NKJV), according to some Greek manuscripts, should be translated “judgment seat of God.” This is the rendering preferred by most commentators, but the rendering is open to question.

In the final analysis though, the question resolves itself as really being immaterial. “*For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son*” ([John 5:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+5.22&t=NKJV)). And since the judgment seat in [Romans 14:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+14.10&t=NKJV) is the one before which all Christians must stand, this can only be synonymous with the judgment seat of Christ referred to in [2 Corinthians 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10&t=NKJV).

Other uses of the word *bema* in the New Testament are found in the gospel accounts of Matthew and John and in the book of Acts. In these accounts, the word *bema* appears in connection with magisterial functions of Pilate, Herod, Gallio, Festus, and Caesar.

Note the different usages of the word *bema* in these three books:

1) [Matthew 27:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.19&t=NKJV); [John 19:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.13&t=NKJV): The word *bema* is used in these two passages referring to the place where Pilate sat when he issued the decrees that Barabbas be released and Jesus be crucified. Pilate sat in judgment upon God’s Son, but the day is coming when these roles will be reversed. God’s Son will one day sit in judgment upon Pilate; and the past judgment rendered by Pilate, among other things, will be accounted for ([Revelation 20:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.12&t=NKJV)).

2) [Acts 12:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+12.21&t=NKJV): Herod arrayed in “*royal apparel,*” sat upon “*his throne* [*bema*] *and made an oration*.” The people listening associated his voice with that of “*God*” rather than “*man*”; and Herod, not giving God the glory, was executed by the angel of the Lord.

3) [Acts 18:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.12&t=NKJV), [16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.16-17&t=NKJV): Gallio, deputy of Achaia, refused to judge Paul when the Jews “*brought him to the judgment seat* [*bema*]” ([Acts 18:12-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.12-16&t=NKJV)). Then in [Acts 18:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.17&t=NKJV), “*the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat* [*bema*].”

4) [Acts 25:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+25.6&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+25.10&t=NKJV), [17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+25.17&t=NKJV): Paul was brought before Festus’ “*judgment seat* [*bema*],” which he called “*Caesar’s judgment seat* [*bema*]”; and upon Paul’s appeal to Caesar, Festus rendered the decision to send him to Rome.

The use of the word *bema* in the preceding passages is not at all in accord with the thought of a rewarding stand. In each instance the judicial activities of a magistrate is in view, which is exactly the Scriptural view of the judgment seat of Christ. When the various Scriptures bearing upon the subject are viewed together, it is clearly revealed that this judgment will result not only in *praise* and *rewards* but also in *rebuke* and *suffering loss*. The latter will be as much of a reality as the former, or vice versa; for, again, every person will “*receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*.”

Justification by Faith, Works

At the judgment seat of Christ there will be *an execution of perfect justice and righteousness*. If rewards are merited, then rewards will be forthcoming; if, on the other hand, punishment is merited, then punishment will be forthcoming. Every Christian will be judged “*according to his works*,” and there will be *exact payment* for services rendered. The former will be *exactly commensurate* with the latter.

In Scripture there is a *justification by faith* and there is also a *justification by works*. And, correspondingly, there is a salvation associated with each. Verses such as [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-9&t=NKJV) deal with justification by faith, with [Ephesians 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.10&t=NKJV) leading into the thought of justification by works. Then, a passage of Scripture such as [James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV) deals more in detail with justification by works.

This is where individuals often commit mayhem when studying Scripture. They see only justification by faith throughout Scripture, and they attempt to make passages such as [James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV) fit into the framework of teachings surrounding justification by faith. And, as a result, confusion reigns supreme.

*Justification by faith* is based entirely upon the finished work of Christ at Calvary and has to do with the salvation that Christians presently possess — the salvation of the spirit (“. . . *that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*” [[John 3:6b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.6b&t=NKJV)]). Works performed by the one being justified by faith cannot enter into this justification in any form or fashion — either preceding or following salvation.

That is, unredeemed man cannot do any works to be saved, and redeemed man cannot do any works to either stay saved or to show that he has been saved. It is a justification “*by grace through faith*” *completely apart from the works of fallen man* — whether preceding or following salvation. Works enter into this justification only to the extent that Christ performed the works on man’s behalf, and man can be justified *only* by receiving that which Christ has already done.

*Justification by works*, on the other hand, is based entirely upon the actions of those who have already been justified by faith, those who have been justified on the basis of Christ’s finished work. “Faith” itself is not part of justification by works. There is no such thing in Scripture as *a justification by faith and works*. There is *a justification by faith*, and there is *a justification by works*; but there is no such thing as *a justification resulting from a combination of the two*.

It is true that works emanate out of faith. And it would be equally true that a different type of works, on the other hand, would emanate out of unfaithfulness ([James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV)). All Christians will be judged on the basis of that which emanated out of one or the other. They will be judged either on the basis of that which emanated out of their faithfulness or on the basis of that which emanated out of their unfaithfulness. That is, they will be judged *on the basis of their prior reaction to faith* (*cf*. [Romans 1:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.17&t=NKJV)), which will have to do with either *their prior faithfulness* or *their prior unfaithfulness*. And, emanating out of the former or out of the latter will be a revelation of works at the judgment seat comparable to either “*gold, silver, precious stones*” or “*wood, hay, straw*.”

In justification by faith, it is the work of Another that makes possible *justification on the basis of faith*; in justification by works, it is faithfulness on the part of those who have already been justified by faith that not only results in works but makes possible *justification on the basis of works.*

In this respect, the type of works resulting in justification by works emanate from one’s faithfulness to his calling; and works of this nature, in turn, bring faith to its proper *goal*. And the goal of faith, brought to this point as a result of works, is *the salvation of one’s soul* — the salvation associated with justification by works (*cf*. [James 2:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.22&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9&t=NKJV)).

Thus, *justification by faith* is based entirely upon Christ’s righteous, justifying act — His finished work at Calvary ([Romans 5:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.16&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.18&t=NKJV)); and *justification by works* is based entirely upon the “*righteous acts of the saints*” — the works of those having previously been justified by faith, through the work of Another ([Revelation 19:8 ASV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.8&t=ASV)).

The word translated “*righteous acts* (KJV: ‘*righteousness*’)” is plural in the Greek text (*dikaiomata*) and cannot refer to the imputed righteousness of Christ possessed by every Christian (which is a singular righteousness). *Dikaiomata* in this verse can only have to do with the works of saved individuals (the same word, appearing in the singular, is translated “*justification*” and “*righteousness*” in [Romans 5:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.16&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.18&t=NKJV) [referring to *justification by faith*, made possible through Christ’s finished work at Calvary]; and a cognate verb [from *dikaioo*] is translated “*justified*” in [James 2:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.24&t=NKJV) [referring to both *justification by faith* and *justification by works*]).

The “*righteous acts of the saints*” — *justifying acts* of the saints — emanate out of faith (faithfulness to one’s calling). And these acts alone will result in justification by works.

The type of works possessed by every Christian will be revealed “*by* [in] *fire*” at the judgment seat. Works emanating out of faith will be revealed as works comparable to “*gold, silver, precious stones*.” And works of this nature will bring about three things:

1) Justification by works (*i*.*e*., a justification on the basis of works that will have emanated out of faithfulness [[James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV)]).

2) Provide the Christian with a wedding garment (made up of the righteous acts of the saints [[Revelation 19:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.7-8&t=NKJV) *cf*. [Ruth 3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ruth+3.3&t=NKJV); [Matthew 22:8-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.8-14&t=NKJV)]).

3) Bring faith to its proper goal (which will result in the salvation of the soul [[1 Peter 1:4-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.4-9&t=NKJV)]).

An individual having been justified by works will appear in Christ’s presence *properly clothed*. He will possess *a wedding garment*; and, consequently, he will be in a position to participate in the activities attendant the bride. Having *denied himself, taken up his cross*, and *followed Christ*, he will realize the salvation of his soul ([Matthew 16:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.24-27&t=NKJV)). And he will be among those who will occupy positions as joint-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.

An individual having failed to be justified by works will appear in Christ’s presence improperly clothed. He will not possess a wedding garment; and, consequently, he will not only be naked but also ashamed (*cf*. [Revelation 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.15&t=NKJV), [17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.17-18&t=NKJV); note “*works*” [v. 15], “*naked*” [v. 17], and “*shame*” [v. 18]).

Lacking a wedding garment, he will be in no position to participate in the activities attendant the bride. Having saved his life (soul) — living for self, rather than having lost his life (soul) for Christ's sake during the present day of trials and testing ([Matthew 16:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.25&t=NKJV)) — he will not realize the salvation of his life (soul) in that coming day. Faith will not have been brought to its proper goal; and, as a result, he will not be among those who will occupy positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.

(*Saving one’s life*, *living for self*, has to do with allowing the self-life [the soulical man] with all its fleshly desires, appetites, etc. to control oneself [in opposition to [Matthew 16:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.24&t=NKJV)]; *losing one’s life for Christ’s sake*, on the other hand, has to do with bringing the self-life [the soulical man] with all its fleshly desires, appetites, etc. under subjection to the spiritual man [*cf*. [Genesis 16:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+16.9&t=NKJV); [Galatians 4:21-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+4.21-31&t=NKJV)], taking up one’s cross, and following Christ [in accord with [Matthew 16:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.24&t=NKJV)].)

Terror of the Lord

Faithfulness to one’s calling, the righteous acts of the saints (the wedding garment, the covering associated with works emanating out of faithfulness, providing a justification by works), and the salvation of the soul are all intimately related and have to do with issues surrounding the judgment seat. Scripture deals with this overall subject on a far broader scale than many realize. [Romans 14:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+14.10&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV); and [2 Corinthians 5:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10-11&t=NKJV) are only three of many passages dealing, either directly or indirectly, with the judgment seat in the New Testament. From the parables in the gospel of Matthew (*e.g.*, [Matthew 22:1-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.1-14&t=NKJV); [24:40-25:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.40-25.30&t=NKJV)) to the opening chapters of the book of Revelation, the New Testament is replete with information concerning things related to the judgment seat.

According to [2 Corinthians 5:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.11&t=NKJV), the judgment seat is the place where “*the terror of the Lord*” will be manifested. The word “terror” in this verse is a translation of the Greek word *phobos*, referring to that which causes “fear,” “terror,” “apprehension.” This is the same word translated “*fearful*” in [Hebrews 10:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.31&t=NKJV) (“*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*”), another reference to events at the judgment seat.

Actually, [Hebrews 10:30-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.30-31&t=NKJV) forms a parallel reference to [2 Corinthians 5:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10-11&t=NKJV), and the preceding verses ([Hebrews 10:26-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26-29&t=NKJV)) provide additional information concerning that facet of the judgment seat associated with “*the terror of the Lord*.”

Note how this entire section in Hebrews chapter ten begins:

*For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge* [Greek: *epignosis*, mature knowledge] *of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,*

*but a certain fearful* [Greek: *phoberos*, a cognate of phobos] *expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation that will devour the adversaries.* ([Hebrews 10:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26-27&t=NKJV))

That Christians, rather than the unredeemed, are in view is evident. The verses introducing this passage ([Hebrews 10:19-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.19-25&t=NKJV)) deal with Christians alone (“*Having therefore, brethren, boldness* . . . .” [[Hebrews 10:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.19&t=NKJV)]), and, beginning with [Hebrews 10:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26&t=NKJV), there is no change in the identity of those addressed.

The word “*we*,” appearing twice in this verse, shows that the writer is talking about himself and other Christians, continuing without a break in the overall continuity of thought from the preceding verses. Further, the word “*knowledge*” in this verse is a translation of the Greek word *epignosis*, showing that these individuals had acquired *a mature knowledge* of the truth (“*after we have received the knowledge* [mature knowledge] *of the truth*”).

*Gnosis* is the regular Greek word for “knowledge,” and *epignosis* is an intensified form of this word (by means of a preposition being prefixed to the word), referring to “a mature knowledge.” Only redeemed individuals possess saved spirits into which the Word of God can be received; and only redeemed individuals possess the indwelling Holy Spirit who can take the Word of God, after it has been received into their saved human spirits, and lead them into “*all truth*” (resulting first in *gnosis*, but leading into *epignosis*). None of this is possible for the unredeemed, for they possess no means to either receive or rightly divide the Word of God.

The “*things of the Spirit of God*,” revealed through the Word of God ([John 16:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+16.13-15&t=NKJV)), are “*foolishness*” to the unredeemed; they cannot “*know* [*gnosis*]” these things, for these things “*are spiritually discerned*” ([1 Corinthians 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.14&t=NKJV)). The unredeemed man, the soulical man, cannot even come into a rudimentary understanding (*gnosis*) of the things revealed by and through the Spirit of God, much less a mature understanding, referred to by the word *epignosis* (note also the word “*illuminated*” in [Hebrews 10:32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.32&t=NKJV). This is from the same Greek word translated “*enlightened*” in [Hebrews 6:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.4&t=NKJV), which, drawing from the type in [Hebrews 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3&t=NKJV); [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4&t=NKJV), can refer only to the saved).

Thus, there can be no room for controversy concerning exactly who is in view in [Hebrews 10:26ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26ff&t=NKJV). Drawing from both the text and the context, the passage can be understood only one way — a passage of Scripture dealing with *the saved alone.*

(*Epignosis* in [Hebrews 10:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26&t=NKJV), as it is used throughout the epistles, is often seen having a peculiar relationship to knowledge as it pertains to the Word of the Kingdom. And, contextually [from [Hebrews 10:23-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.23-25&t=NKJV)], that is the relationship seen in this verse through the use of *epignosis*. Then, also contextually, it is only those who have come into this mature knowledge of the Word of the Kingdom who are able to commit the particular sin in view.)

Sinning Willfully

Christ provided Himself as the Sacrifice for sin, His blood is today on the mercy seat in heaven, and He is presently occupying the office of High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of sinning Christians. Christ is presently performing a cleansing from defilement for Christians who sin, and all a Christian needs to do in order to avail himself of this provided cleansing is to confess his sin. When he does this, cleansing will occur ([1 John 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.9&t=NKJV)).

The willful sin of [Hebrews 10:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26&t=NKJV) results in defilement, as does any sin. But, a different situation exists with this sin. This verse states that *no sacrifice* exists for those who sin after the manner dealt with by the verse, which separates it from Christ’s present ministry.

How does this sin differ from any other sin that Christians can commit? Is it possible that this sin could somehow be brought under Christ’s present ministry and confessed, with forgiveness resulting from the person's confession? If so, How? If not, Why not?

1) Christ’s Present Ministry

To properly understand *the willful sin*, for several reasons (one reason being contextual), it should be viewed, first of all, in the light of Christ’s present high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Note the context of [Hebrews 10:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26&t=NKJV) ([Hebrews 10:19-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.19-22&t=NKJV)) and also [1 John 1:6-2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.6-2.2&t=NKJV). The “*blood*” of Christ is presently on the mercy seat in the “*holiest* [Holy of Holies]” of the heavenly sanctuary; and a “*new and living way*” of access has been provided through the One who shed this blood, our “*High Priest over the house of God*.”

The *blood of Christ*, presently on the mercy seat of the heavenly sanctuary, “*cleanses* [keeps on cleansing]” Christians who have become defiled (through sin) as they “*walk* [keep on walking] *in the light*” ([1 John 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.7&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Hebrews 10:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.22&t=NKJV)). It is impossible for the ones walking in the light to occupy a position other than being cleansed from sin; but, viewing the other side of the picture, it is entirely possible for Christians to not walk in the light, in which case there will be no cleansing.

To understand exactly what is meant by *walking in the light*, one must draw from the typology of the tabernacle. The light was provided by a seven-leafed golden candlestick inside the Holy Place where the priests carried on part of their ministry, and the only way that these priests were permitted to enter the Holy Place and walk in this light was through a previous cleansing at the brazen laver (basin) in the courtyard.

This laver lay between the brazen altar and the Holy Place and had upper and lower basins for washing the hands and feet. The entire bodies of these priests had been washed upon their entrance into the priesthood ([Exodus 29:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+29.4&t=NKJV); [40:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+40.12-15&t=NKJV)) — an act never to be repeated — but in their subsequent ministry, it was necessary to avail themselves of partial washings (washings of parts of the body) at the laver. Their hands and feet became soiled in their ministry, and these parts of the body had to be cleansed prior to entering the Holy Place ([Exodus 30:18-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+30.18-21&t=NKJV); [40:30-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+40.30-32&t=NKJV)).

Exactly the same thing holds true for Christians, New Testament priests, in the antitype today. Christians have received a complete washing (received at the point of the birth from above, upon their entrance into the priesthood) — an act never to be repeated. But, as the Old Testament priests, they must now avail themselves of partial washings in their ministry. And this is seen in the type by and through the actions of Old Testament priests washing at the laver.

This is what Jesus alluded to in [John 13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.8&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.10&t=NKJV):

*If I do not wash* [Greek: *nipto*, referring to a part of the body (the Septuagint uses this same word in [Exodus 30:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+30.19&t=NKJV), [21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+30.21&t=NKJV))] *you, you have no part with me* [note: not ‘in me,’ but ‘with me’]”; and “*He who is washed* [Greek: *louo*, (‘bathed’ in the NKJV) referring to the entire body (the Septuagint uses this same word in [Exodus 29:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+29.4&t=NKJV); [40:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+40.12&t=NKJV))] *needs only to wash* [Greek: *nipto*] *his feet* . . . .

This is also what is alluded to in [Hebrews 10:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.22&t=NKJV) and [1 John 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.7&t=NKJV).

Old Testament priests whose hands and feet had become soiled through activity in the courtyard *could not* bypass the laver and proceed on to the Holy Place. *Nor can* New Testament priests. New Testament priests must *first*, as the Old Testament priests, avail themselves of cleansing. Defilement in the Christians’ case comes through contact with sin; and cleansing, according to the context of [1 John 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.7&t=NKJV), is accomplished through confession of sin:

*If we confess our sins, He* [God] *is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. ([1 John 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.9&t=NKJV))

And this cleansing is accomplished solely on the basis of Christ’s shed blood on the mercy seat in the heavenly sanctuary:

*My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate* [Greek: *parakletos*, one called alongside to help in time of need] *with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

*And He Himself is the propitiation* [Greek: *hilasmos*, (God appeased, through Christ’s work on the basis of His shed blood on the mercy seat)] *for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world* [contextually, a reference to all of the saved in the world, not the unsaved (a cleansing for Christians alone is in view; the unsaved and eternal salvation are not in view at all in these verses)]. ([1 John 2:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+2.1-2&t=NKJV))

Thus, the ones walking in the light in [1 John 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.7&t=NKJV) are Christians who have availed themselves of the provision in [1 John 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.9&t=NKJV). As they continue walking in the light (continue availing themselves of this provision, allowing continued access to the Holy Place), the blood of Christ continues cleansing them from “*all sin*.”

And a Christian refusing to avail himself of provided cleansing today is seen walking in darkness. He has not come to the laver and, consequently, can only remain in the darkened courtyard outside the light in the Holy Place. He has refused confession of sin; he has refused the cleansing provided by Christ. And for such an individual, in reality, “*there remains no more sacrifice for sins*.” That is, there is no sacrifice for those refusing the sacrifice that God has provided in the person of His Son.

Thus, contextually ([Hebrews 10:19-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.19-22&t=NKJV)), one might think that the willful sin in verse twenty-six (for which there is no sacrifice) would be a Christian’s refusal to avail himself of Christ’s present high priestly ministry. In this respect, there would be no sacrifice for his unconfessed sins (for a Christian refusing to confess his sins would be refusing the provided sacrifice).

2) But . . . .

But Christians harboring sins of the flesh and refusing to confess these sins *cannot possibly* be that which they are warned against in [Hebrews 10:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26&t=NKJV). This verse continues the thought from the immediately preceding verses ([Hebrews 10:23-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.23-25&t=NKJV)), and this thought has nothing whatsoever with Christians confessing (or not confessing) their sins.

Nor can the willful sin in this verse be thought of in the broad sense of sins committed by Christians in a willful, or a deliberate, or a knowing manner. If the truth were known, it could probably easily be shown that most sins committed by Christians would fall into a singular category — things that Christians knew were sins before they committed them, knew were sins during the time in which they were committing them, and knew were sins after they had committed them.

The only possible way to properly understand the willful sin in [Hebrews 10:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26&t=NKJV), for which there is no sacrifice, is to view this sin, *contextually, within the book of Hebrews where it is found*. If this is not done, a person will invariably go wrong at this point in Scripture.

Note first that all of the warnings in Hebrews are closely related, drawing heavily from the Old Testament types. The second warning ([Hebrews 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3&t=NKJV); [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4&t=NKJV)) draws from the account of the Israelites under Moses, and the same thought is continued in the third warning ([Hebrews 6:4ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.4ff&t=NKJV)), relating the matter to Christians.

In both the type ([Hebrews 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3&t=NKJV); [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4&t=NKJV) [second warning]) and the antitype ([Hebrews 6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6&t=NKJV) [third warning]), the sin referenced in the fourth warning ([Hebrews 10:26ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26ff&t=NKJV)) is present. The Israelites under Moses committed a sin for which there was no sacrifice (second warning), and Christians today can commit *exactly the same sin*, with the same result following (third warning). Then the fourth warning continues with thoughts pertaining to this sin; and the matter has to do with “*so great a salvation*” (chapter 2 [first warning]), resulting in “*blessing*” associated with the “*birthright*” ([Hebrews 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12&t=NKJV) [fifth warning]).

That is the broad contextual scope of the matter. The Israelites, in the type, through their actions at Kadesh-Barnea — refusing to go in and take the land to which they had been called — committed a sin for which there was *no sacrifice*. And, with there being *no sacrifice* for this sin, God didn't, He couldn't, change His mind concerning that which He had decreed pertaining to the matter.

And Christians, in the antitype, can commit *exactly the same sin relative to the heavenly land to which they have been called*. And, as in the type, *no sacrifice* exists for such a sin. As in the type, God won’t, He can’t change His mind concerning that which He has decreed pertaining to this sin, if committed by His people today.

This is plain from that which is stated in [Hebrews 6:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.2-4&t=NKJV), again drawing from the type in chapters three and four:

*For it is impossible . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance . . . .”*

(For additional information on the preceding, refer to the author’s book, [Bible One - Let Us Go On by Arlen Chitwood](http://www.bibleone.net/LUGO.htm), Chapters 4, 5, “Leaving the Principles” and “If They Shall Fall Away.”)

Then note that the reference to this sin is the continuation of a text having to do with a central purpose for Christians assembling together during the present dispensation — whether on Sunday at a regular meeting place, or at any other time or place during the week ([Hebrews 10:23-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.23-25&t=NKJV)). The particular purpose given in the text is singular: Christians meeting together in order to exhort and encourage one another concerning the hope set before each one of them (“*profession of our faith*” [[Hebrews 10:23 KJV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.23&t=KJV)] should be translated, “*confession of our hope*”). And this hope set before every Christian is *the hope that they might one day realize the very thing to which they have been called — win a crown in the present race of the faith and, as a result, occupy a regal position with Christ in that coming day of His power.*

In short, Christians are *exhorted to assemble together for a particular purpose, and then they are warned concerning the danger of failing to assemble together on a regular basis for this purpose*. They can either find mutual strength in the race of the faith through assembling together, or they can fail to assemble for this mutual strength and find themselves in danger of *falling away and becoming involved in that which Scripture refers to as willful sin.*

The *willful sin*, simply put, has to do with *apostasy, after one has come into a mature knowledge of the things surrounding the hope set before Christians* — something seen in the type in the second warning and in the antitype in the third warning. And sinning after this fashion will result in a Christian *failing* to come into possession of s*o great salvation* (first warning), synonymous with failing to realize *the rights of the firstborn* (fifth warning).

[Numbers 15:30-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+15.30-31&t=NKJV), immediately following the account of the Israelites refusal to enter into the land at Kadesh-Barnea ([Numbers 13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13-14&t=NKJV)), deals with God’s statement concerning a sin for which there was no sacrifice. And an example of such a sin — a man violating the Sabbath — immediately follows God’s instructions concerning the matter.

God’s statement concerning a sin for which there was *no sacrifice* in this passage had to do with a person acting in open rebellion, followed by his being cut off from the people of Israel (which was exactly what occurred at and following the events at Kadesh-Barnea). And the contextual example not only had to do with the experiences of the Israelites, beginning at Kadesh-Barnea ([Numbers 13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13-14&t=NKJV)), but it also had to do with a man violating the Sabbath ([Numbers 15:32-36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+15.32-36&t=NKJV)).

As with the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea, so with the man violating the Sabbath. *There was no sacrifice for the sin committed by either*. Rather, in both instances, *the Lord commanded that a sentence of death was to be carried out*. And, resulting, an entire accountable generation died on the one hand, and a man was taken outside the camp and stoned on the other.

The land set before Christians is associated with a rest, *a Sabbath rest*, drawing from [Genesis 2:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.1-3&t=NKJV) ([Hebrews 4:4-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.4-9&t=NKJV)). And a Christian turning his back on this land (after coming into a mature knowledge of the things surrounding the land) would be doing exactly the same thing that the Israelites under Moses did at Kadesh-Barnea (after hearing the report concerning the land by the twelve spies). Then, in another respect, such a Christian would be doing violence to that which God had to say about *the Sabbath rest set before the people of God*, in a similar respect to the man violating the Sabbath in [Numbers 15:32-36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+15.32-36&t=NKJV).

The Sabbath was *a sign* pointing to a day of rest following God’s present six days of work ([Exodus 31:13-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+31.13-17&t=NKJV)). As God rested on the seventh day after working six days to restore a past ruined creation (the material creation) — establishing an unchangeable, foundational pattern — He is going to rest on a seventh day (a 1,000-year day) after working six days (six 6,000-year days) to restore two present ruined creations (both man and the material creation once again).

Thus, drawing from both [Numbers 13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13-15&t=NKJV) and [Hebrews 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3&t=NKJV); [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4&t=NKJV); [6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6&t=NKJV), it can easily be shown how Christians, in [Hebrews 10:26ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26ff&t=NKJV), can sin willfully today. They can do so by and through only one means: *coming into a mature knowledge of the truth surrounding their calling, and then apostatizing (turning away from this truth*).

Any Christian committing such an act, according to [Hebrews 10:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.29&t=NKJV), will have done three things:

1) Trodden “*under foot the Son of God*.”

2) Considered the blood of Christ “*an unholy* [a common] *thing*.”

3) Insulted “*the Spirit of grace*.”

God places the willful sin in a category of this nature simply because of the high place in which He holds that which He has stated concerning the coming reign of His Son. And, according to Scripture, any Christian coming into a mature knowledge of that which God has stated in this realm, and then *turning away — apostatizing* — has only one thing awaiting him:

*a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* ([Hebrews 10:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.27&t=NKJV))

Then note how verses thirty and thirty-one of Hebrews chapter ten parallel [2 Corinthians 5:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10-11&t=NKJV):

*For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord shall judge His people.”*

*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Events of the judgment seat will be one of the most terrible times many Christians will ever experience, for Christians who have refused to follow the Spirit’s leadership during the present day and time will, at the judgment seat, “*fall into the hands of the living God*.” Such Christians will find it to be a “fearful,” “terrible” experience, for there the “*terror of the Lord*” will be manifested, and *a completely just reward* (*recompense*) will be meted out.

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Chapter 4

**To Him Who Overcomes**

*To the angel of the church in Ephesus . . . Smyrna . . . Pergamos . . . Thyatira . . . Sardis . . . Philadelphia . . . Laodicea write . . . .*

*I know your works . . . .*

*To him who overcomes .* . . . ([Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV))

Revelation chapters two and three contain seven messages to seven churches located in Asia during the first century; and these messages were directed to these churches through seven different angels — angels who had been placed over these seven churches.

This introduces a facet of angelic ministry within Christendom that is often overlooked.

According to [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV), angels are “*ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation* [*lit*., to minister for the sake of the ones about to inherit salvation].” Then, according to Revelation chapters two and three, each church possessed an appointed, ministering angel; and the context clearly reveals that these angels had been placed in their respective positions for the same basic reason as set forth in [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV).

Angelic ministry in Christendom concerns the coming inheritance of the saints, the salvation of the soul, etc. [Hebrews 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.14&t=NKJV) refers to *the individual nature* of angelic ministry (*cf*. [Acts 12:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+12.15&t=NKJV)), and Revelation chapters two and three refer to *the corporate nature* of angelic ministry.

Many expositors over the years have sought to teach that the word “angel” in Revelation, chapters two and three (see also [Revelation 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.16&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.20&t=NKJV)) is a reference to individual pastors (or possibly other high officials) in each of the seven churches. The Greek word translated “angel” (*aggelos*) refers to a *messenger of God*, and these seven messengers are looked upon by these individuals as seven human messengers from the seven churches.

This view, however, for several reasons, is not at all tenable:

1) [Revelation 1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1&t=NKJV) provides a distinction between the seven angels and individuals comprising the seven churches. In this chapter, rather than being integrally identified, the seven angels and the seven churches are seen as separate, distinct entities. The seven churches are represented by the “*seven golden lampstands*” in Christ’s midst, but the seven angels are represented by the “*seven stars*” in Christ’s right hand ([Revelation 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.13&t=NKJV), [16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.16&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.20&t=NKJV)).

2) Interpreting the word *aggelos* as a reference to individual pastors (seven pastors of seven churches) is not in keeping with that which is taught concerning pastors elsewhere in the New Testament. Churches throughout the New Testament are *never* spoken of as having only one pastor. The thought is *always* “pastors” (or “elders”) of a church (*cf*. [Acts 14:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+14.23&t=NKJV); [15:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+15.6&t=NKJV), [23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+15.23&t=NKJV); [20:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.17&t=NKJV); [Philippians 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.1&t=NKJV); [Titus 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+1.5&t=NKJV); [James 5:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+5.14&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 5:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.1&t=NKJV)).

(The New Testament refers to churches in a region [*e.g*., “*the churches of Macedonia*” or “*the churches of Galatia*” ([2 Corinthians 8:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+8.1&t=NKJV); [Galatians 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.2&t=NKJV))], but reference is made to *only one church in a city or village* [*e.g*., “*the church of the Thessalonians*” or “*the church of* (in) *Ephesus*” ([2 Thessalonians 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Thessalonians+1.1&t=NKJV); [Revelation 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.1&t=NKJV))].

*All Christians in one city comprised one church that met in various homes throughout the city, requiring the ministries of pastors within that one church*. And the simplicity and oneness of the church in a city was characterized by the fact that all Christians in that city were automatically looked upon as being members of that church [[Romans 14:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+14.1&t=NKJV); [15:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+15.7&t=NKJV); [16:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+16.2&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 16:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+16.10-11&t=NKJV); [3 John 1:5-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=3John+1.5-8&t=NKJV)].

This is the apparent fashion after which each of the seven churches in Revelation, chapters two and three was structured; and since there were no individual pastors of these churches, the use of the word *aggelos* in each epistle could not possibly be thought of as a reference to the pastor of the church being addressed.)

3) Then, the manner in which the Greek word *aggelos* is used throughout the New Testament should be considered, particularly the way in which the word is used in the book of Revelation. This word appears over one hundred eighty times in the New Testament, and seventy-six of these occurrences are in the book of Revelation alone. There are only six instances in the entire New Testament where the word *aggelos* is clearly used of men as messengers of God ([Matthew 11:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+11.10&t=NKJV); [Mark 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+1.2&t=NKJV); [Luke 7:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+7.24&t=NKJV), [27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+7.27&t=NKJV); [9:52](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+9.52&t=NKJV); [James 2:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.25&t=NKJV)). In all other occurrences there is nothing to indicate that the word should be understood as referring to anyone other than heavenly messengers.

To understand *aggelos* in Revelation chapters two and three (also [Revelation 1:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.20&t=NKJV)) as referring to earthly messengers, while understanding the same word throughout the remainder of the book as referring to heavenly messengers, is forced and unnatural. Consistency of interpretation would require one to acknowledge that angels are seen as being very instrumental in God’s dealings with mankind throughout this book, beginning in [Revelation 1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-3&t=NKJV).

The Overcomers

The seven messages to the seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three are all identical in their basic structure. The opening verse of each message contains descriptive terminology taken almost exclusively, word-for-word, from the description of Christ given in chapter one, which has to do with *judgment* (*ref*. chapter 2 of this book under the section “We Must All Appear”).

Following this, each message begins with the statement, “*I know your works . . .* .” Then, certain things are stated concerning each church relative to past works, and each message concludes with an overcomer’s promise.

Contextually, the “descriptive” aspects of Christ in chapters two and three can only continue the thought of judgment from chapter one. The seven epistles to the seven churches in chapters two and three provide additional information, forming commentary, with *judgment* continuing to be the central issue at hand.

“Works” are then brought into the picture in each epistle, for it is works that will be reviewed when Christians are judged.

“Overcoming” and promised “blessings” then terminate each epistle, clearly revealing that only the overcomers — those possessing works comparable to “*gold, silver, precious stones*” — will be allowed to enter into the promised blessings.

There are seven different overcomer’s promises in chapters two and three and each promise is *millennial* in its scope of fulfillment. That is, these promises will be realized during the 1,000-year reign of Christ after Christians have had their works tried “*by* [in] *fire*” at the judgment seat.

Christ is seen as Judge in the midst of the seven churches in chapter one, and chapters two and three provide information concerning why and on what basis these seven churches — representing Christianity as a whole — are to come under judgment.

The word “overcome” is a translation of the Greek word *nikao*, which means “to conquer” or “to gain a victory over.” The thought inherent in the word *nikao* (or *nike*, the noun form of the word) always means to *be victorious in a contest or conflict*. The “overcomers” are the *conquerors*, the *victors*; they are the ones who will have successfully run the race of the faith; they are the ones who will have conquered the numerous encountered obstacles along the way.

Christians have been saved with a view to their being overcomers and bringing forth fruit. This matter comprises the very heart of the message, which is to be proclaimed to Christians throughout the dispensation. Israel has been set aside during this time, and God is calling another people — a separate and distinct people — “*for His name*,” taken mainly from among the Gentiles ([Acts 15:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+15.14&t=NKJV)).

Those presently being called comprise an entirely *new creation* ([2 Corinthians 5:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.17&t=NKJV)) that is neither Jew nor Gentile, forming *one new man* “*in Christ*” ([Ephesians 2:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.13-15&t=NKJV)). And God is extending to individual members of this *one new man* the privilege of overcoming and bringing forth fruit, with a view to their occupying positions as joint-heirs with Christ in the heavenly sphere of the coming kingdom.

The present dispensation is the time that God has set aside to accord redeemed man the privilege of overcoming and bringing forth fruit, and judgment at the end of this dispensation will reveal man’s response to this privilege. Some Christians will be shown to have overcome, possessing works comparable to “*gold, silver, precious stones*”; but other Christians will be shown to have been overcome, possessing works comparable to “*wood, hay, straw*” ([1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV)).

The overcomers will, at that time, inherit the promised blessings of Revelation chapters two and three; but those shown to have been overcome will be denied these blessings. This is the subject matter dealt with in the opening three chapters of the book of Revelation.

Three Enemies

There are three great enemies in the Christian life that must be overcome. These enemies are 1) *the world*, 2) *the flesh*, and 3) *the devil*. All temptations come to Christians in these three realms, any one of them can produce shipwreck in the lives of Christians, and each is overcome after a different fashion.

1) The World

According to [1 John 5:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+5.1-5&t=NKJV), the “world” is overcome by *our faith*:

*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.*

*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.*

*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*

*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.*

*Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

The text deals with the saved, not with the unsaved. It deals with the saved faithfully keeping the commandments of God by and through a bringing forth from above, and, in this manner, *overcoming the world.*

The thought advanced by many Christians that “overcome” in this passage has to do with the simple salvation message, placing every Christian in the status of an overcomer on the basis of his presently possessed eternal salvation, is completely foreign to that which is taught here or elsewhere in the New Testament. In fact, such a teaching is completely contrary to and destroys that which is dealt with in this passage.

Overcoming does not even enter into the picture until *after one has been saved*. There is no such thing as unsaved individuals overcoming the *world* (or, for that matter, the *flesh*, or the *devil*). Overcoming has to do with spiritual verities, and only those who have “*passed from death to life*” — only those who have been made alive spiritually, by the Spirit breathing life into the ones previously having no life — can function in the spiritual realm. In this respect, *Christians alone are in a position to overcome in the manner seen in these verses.*

*Overcoming the world* is the subject matter in [1 John 5:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+5.1-5&t=NKJV), and there are four references in these five verses to being *brought forth from above* (three in v. 1 and one in v. 4).

And, as well, there are six other references in 1 John to the same thing, a major subject of 1 John in relation to Christians and overcoming ([1 John 2:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+2.29&t=NKJV); [3:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+3.9&t=NKJV) [twice]; [1 John 4:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+4.7&t=NKJV); [5:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+5.18&t=NKJV) [twice].)

The expression, brought forth from above (born from above), *is not used* in 1 John or elsewhere in Scripture relative to the unsaved ([John 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.13&t=NKJV); [3:3-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.3-7&t=NKJV); [James 1:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.18&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.3&t=NKJV), [23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.23&t=NKJV)). The expression is *always used relative to the saved*. Overcoming is in view, and the power to overcome is derived from above, not from within the individual.

(This is not to say that the divine work surrounding an unsaved individual believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and being saved is not to be viewed as *a bringing forth from above*, for there is no other way that he could be saved. Rather, it is to say that Scripture does not use the expression in this manner. Scripture uses the expression only one way — relative to a work of the Spirit among the saved.

For additional information on this subject, refer to the author’s book, in this site, [Brought Forth from Above BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-three.php#Brought%20Forth%20from%20Above%20BOOK).)

Overcoming in [1 John 5:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+5.4-5&t=NKJV) must be understood contextually. Note the connecting word, “For,” beginning verse four. The first three verses of this chapter place the one who has been brought forth from above in the position of keeping God’s commandments (the only way he can keep them — living in the sphere of the spiritual, not the fleshly). Then, the person in verse four is one who, through faith (through believing God, inseparably associated with being brought forth from above), keeps these commandments; and, in this manner — by keeping God’s commandments — he is presently overcoming the world.

The “world,” referring to the present *world system* under the dominion and sway of the god of this age, is a major subject of 1 John. Christians are commanded, “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world*.” The things in the world, under the control of Satan, are “*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*.”

The world does not know the one True and Living God; nor does the world know Christians. The entire world “*lies in wickedness* [under the control of the wicked one]” ([1 John 2:15-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+2.15-18&t=NKJV); [3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+3.1&t=NKJV); [5:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+5.19&t=NKJV)). This is the status of the way things exist during Man’s Day, but a change is in the offing (near or foreseeable future). The entire world system as we know it today is about to pass out of existence. A change in the entire administration is about to occur. Until that time though, Christians are to regulate their activities in accordance with [1 John 5:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+5.1-5&t=NKJV).

2) The Flesh

According to [Romans 8:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.13&t=NKJV) and [Colossians 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+3.5&t=NKJV), the flesh is overcome by *putting to death “the deeds of the body,”* which emanate from the ever-present sin nature, and all things emanating from the sin nature are to be kept in a constant state of mortification:

*For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*. ([Romans 8:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.13&t=NKJV))

*Therefore put to death your members that are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* ([Colossians 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+3.5&t=NKJV))

The revealed way to put to death “*the deeds of the body*” is set forth in [Romans 8:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.13-14&t=NKJV): “. . . *if by the Spirit . . . as many as are led by the Spirit of God* . . . .” This, as well, is what is involved in [Galatians 5:16ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+5.16ff&t=NKJV): “*Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh* . . . .”

There is a constant warfare in the life of every believer brought about by the presence of both the man of flesh and the man of Spirit residing in the same body, with either man capable of gaining the ascendancy and proving victorious in the conflict. *Walking in the Spirit*, *being brought forth from above*, will assure victory over the man of flesh; and in this manner the Christian will be putting to death (mortifying) “*the deeds of the body*,” overcoming the flesh. On the other hand, *giving way to the flesh* will quench the Spirit, assuring defeat in one’s life. In this manner the Christian will be allowing “*the deeds of the body*” to live, resulting in his being overcome by the flesh.

The man of flesh with his deeds are seen in Scripture only one way — *a ruined creation, under the sentence of death* (*cf*. [Genesis 1:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2-4&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+4.6&t=NKJV); [Romans 7:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+7.24&t=NKJV)). And if man doesn’t put the things associated with the man of flesh to death during the present time, they will rise up and testify against him at a future time, with the Lord Himself being forced to take care of matters. *The sentence of death must and will be carried out* — whether by man during the present time or by the Lord during a time yet future.

The original and unchangeable pattern for restoration associated with a ruined creation has forever been established in the opening verses of Genesis. The *darkness “upon the face of the deep”* in [Genesis 1:2a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2a&t=NKJV) had to do with darkness over a material creation that had come into a state of ruin; and this darkness continued to exist even following the restoration of the ruined creation ([Genesis 1:3-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.3-5&t=NKJV)). God simply brought light into existence and left the darkness alone. He placed light alongside the darkness and divided between the two (*cf*. [Isaiah 45:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+45.7&t=NKJV)).

However, the day is coming when God will make “*all things new.*” And, at that time, the present darkness seen in the opening chapter of Genesis will no longer exist ([Revelation 21:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.5&t=NKJV), [25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.25&t=NKJV)).

Fallen man forms a subsequent ruined creation of God, and the restoration of this ruined creation must be effected after *the identical order* set forth in the original pattern. The parallel restoration for man, wherein the *light shines “out of darkness,”* occurs at the point of his salvation, the point of his believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. The man of flesh, associated with the ruined creation (as the darkness in the Genesis account was associated with the ruin of the material creation), continues in existence. As the darkness was retained in the restoration of the material creation, so the old nature is retained in the restoration of man; but as God brought light into existence and made a division between the light and the darkness in Genesis, He brings a new nature into existence and makes a division between the new and the old today.

Then, the day is coming when God will make “*all things new*”; and as the darkness in the first chapter of Genesis will no longer exist, the old nature presently possessed by redeemed man will, likewise, no longer exist (*cf*. [Romans. 7:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans.+7.24&t=NKJV); [8:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.23&t=NKJV); [1 John 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+3.2&t=NKJV)).

“Darkness” in Scripture is associated with the *works of the flesh* ([John 3:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.19&t=NKJV); [Romans 13:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+13.12&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 4:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+4.5&t=NKJV)), and the roots of this association, as previously noted, are found in the opening verses of Genesis. Darkness appears in connection with the ruined creation in the type, and the old nature appears in connection with the ruined creation in the antitype.

Nothing good is ever said about darkness in Scripture. Only of the *light* does God use the word “good” ([Genesis 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.4&t=NKJV)). And the same must hold true concerning the old and new natures possessed by man (*cf*. [1 John 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.6&t=NKJV), [8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.8&t=NKJV)).

Both darkness and the old nature are, so to speak, *under the sentence of death*; and this sentence is to be carried out — by man during the present time, or by the Lord yet future. Thus, waiting for the coming day, when the Lord will complete matters relative to the carrying out of *this sentence of death*, redeemed man in his present state is to *reprove “the unfruitful works of darkness”* ([Ephesians 5:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+5.11&t=NKJV)); he is *to mortify — put to death — “the deeds of the body”* ([Romans 8:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.13&t=NKJV)). And *in this manner alone* redeemed man is to overcome the flesh.

3) The Devil

According to [James 4:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+4.7&t=NKJV) and [1 Peter 5:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.8-9&t=NKJV), the devil (Satan) is overcome by *resisting*:

*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.* ([James 4:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+4.7&t=NKJV)).

*Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

*Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.* ([1 Peter 5:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.8-9&t=NKJV))

Christians are to set themselves against, withstand, the devil as *they stand firm in the faith*. “The faith” is an expression in the New Testament peculiarly related to *the Word of the Kingdom* (*e.g*., [Acts 6:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.7&t=NKJV); [13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+13.8&t=NKJV); [Romans 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.5&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 16:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+16.13&t=NKJV); [Galatians 1:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.23&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.23&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+3.8&t=NKJV); [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV)). Christians are in a contest/race of “*the faith*” ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-27&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 4:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.7&t=NKJV)). And it is while *standing firm in the faith, in this race*, that Christians are to withstand, resist, Satan.

Christians are to be “*sober . . . vigilant*”; and the reason given is “*because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*.” The word “*sober*” is the translation of the Greek word, *nepho*, which means “to exercise self-control” or “to be well-balanced”; and the word “*vigilant*” is a translation of the Greek word, *gregoreo*, meaning “to watch,” or “to be awake,” as seen in [1 Thessalonians 5:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.6&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.10&t=NKJV) (*ref*. chapter 2 in this book).

Christians are to always be watchful and exercise a well-balanced judgment in the race of the faith, for Satan stands ever ready to bring about defeat in their lives through his “*wiles* [crafty, deceitful ways]” ([Ephesians 6:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.11&t=NKJV)).

Why is Satan so intensely interested in bringing about defeat in the lives of Christians today? Why has Satan expended so much time and energy throughout almost two millennia in efforts to bring Christianity into the apostate condition in which it presently finds itself? What is so special about Christianity, attracting Satan’s attention after this fashion? The answer is very simple, but it is one which goes almost completely unrecognized within the confines of the lukewarm, apostate Laodicean Church of today.

To properly understand the present warfare between Satan and Christians, one must go back to the creation of man and understand certain things concerning the reason for man’s creation. Adam was brought into existence to rule the earth, and Eve was removed from Adam’s body, by and through the process revealed in [Genesis 2:21-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.21-23&t=NKJV), to reign as consort queen with him ([Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV)). And the dominion to be exercised by Adam was the one which Satan held at that time (and continues to hold today).

Satan had previously been brought into existence to rule the earth. He was the “*anointed cherub* [messianic angel].” He held the chief position among a great host of angels who, along with him, ruled the earth under the one True and Living God, in a complete structural breakdown of powers and authorities (*cf*. [Ezekiel 28:14-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.14-16&t=NKJV); [Luke 4:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+4.5-6&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.12&t=NKJV); [Revelation 12:7-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.7-9&t=NKJV)).

But the day came when Satan rebelled against the Lord and succeeded in leading one-third of the angels ruling with him at that time in this rebellion. Satan sought *to elevate his throne* (*increase his delegated power and authority*) and “be like the most High” ([Isaiah 14:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.13-14&t=NKJV)). Satan sought to become the ruler over all the provinces throughout the universe — the position held by God Himself — rather than continue ruling only the province over which he had originally been placed.

As a result, Satan’s kingdom was reduced to a ruined state, but he himself retained his position as ruler of the kingdom. And he would be allowed to retain this position until that day when his God-appointed successor appeared on the scene, ready to take the scepter ([Genesis 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2&t=NKJV), [26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26&t=NKJV), [28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.28&t=NKJV) [2a]; [Psalm 110:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+110.1-2&t=NKJV)).

This is *the reason* Satan was so intensely interested in bringing about the fall of Adam. Adam had been created to occupy the position that Satan held. The wrecked domain (the earth) had been restored, and the one created to rule in Satan’s stead had been created from the very dust of the restored domain. Satan’s replacement was present, on a restored domain, though he had yet to take the scepter.

Thus, following Adam’s creation, the only hope that Satan possessed was to bring about Adam’s disqualification through sin, as he himself had previously been disqualified through sin. Otherwise, Adam would ultimately take the scepter, and Satan’s reign would end.

However, such was not to occur. Satan, by tempting Eve, brought about the first man, the first Adam’s fall and disqualification. This allowed Satan to continue his reign, necessitating the appearance of the second Man, the last Adam at a later date (*cf*. [1 Corinthians 15:45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.45&t=NKJV)).

The second Man, the last Adam not only had to be brought on the scene, but He had to meet Satan face-to-face in order to show that He was fully qualified to act in the realm for which man had originally been created. Then, the last Adam provided redemption for fallen man, with a view to man ultimately occupying the position for which he had originally been created.

Christ’s virgin birth (He must be God as well as Man, for the triune God alone can act in the realm of redemption [[Genesis 1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1-4&t=NKJV)]), His face-to-face encounter with Satan in the wilderness, and His vicarious death at Calvary, have all come to pass. However, He has yet to wrest the governmental reins of the earth from Satan’s hands. He has yet to take the scepter and rule the earth in Satan’s stead.

An interval of time exists prior to His taking the kingdom in order that He, by and through the Holy Spirit, might call out a bride to reign as consort queen with Him. This is the reason for the present dispensation, a fact little recognized and understood in Christendom today.

As the first Adam possessed a bride removed from his body to reign with him (proceeding the time he was to take the scepter), so will the last Adam. This bride is presently being called out from among the redeemed, and for the past two millennia, Satan has been doing all within his power to thwart God’s purpose for the present dispensation. His attack today is directed specifically and intently against Christians for one simple, revealed reason. Christians are the ones destined to be placed as consort queen with Christ in His reign.

Christ is presently at the right hand of God, and Satan cannot touch Him; but Christians are presently upon the earth, and Satan walks “*to and fro on the earth . . . back and forth on it*” ([Job 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Job+1.7&t=NKJV); [2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Job+2.2&t=NKJV); *cf*. [1 Peter 5:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.8&t=NKJV)), venting his wrath against them, seeking at every turn to bring about their defeat and consequent disqualification to occupy a position with Christ during the coming day of His power. Satan, at every turn, seeks to overcome Christians, rather than allowing Christians to overcome him.

In the coming kingdom, Christ will rule in Satan’s stead, and Christians ruling with Christ will rule in the stead of angels presently ruling with Satan. The entire matter surrounding the present warfare between Satan and Christians has *the coming kingdom in view*. Overcoming Christians will occupy the numerous proffered positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom, but the Christians who are overcome will be denied these positions. Future positions with Christ in the kingdom, presently being offered to Christians, are for the overcomers alone.

“There exists a government of the universe conducted by great angels and their subordinates. Many of these have fallen from their original allegiance to God and prostitute their offices and powers to corrupt His realms. It is therefore inevitable that a rearrangement shall come in that heavenly government. This will be effected by Christ and His glorified followers being invested with the whole of that heavenly authority. For it is written that ‘not unto the angels hath God subjected the inhabited world to come’” ([Hebrews 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.5&t=NKJV)).”

—G. H. Lang, World Chaos, 1948

The Whole Armor of God

[Ephesians 6:10-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.10-18&t=NKJV) is the passage in the Word of God that instructs Christians concerning how to be properly clothed in order to withstand the onslaughts of Satan and his demons today. There is a battle presently being waged. This battle is specifically said to not be “*against flesh and blood* [not against fallen man residing on the earth],” but, instead, “*against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world* [age], *against spiritual wickedness in high places* [against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenlies]” ([Ephesians 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.12&t=NKJV)). And the issue at hand concerns *a future governmental control over the earth from a heavenly realm as joint-heirs with the “King of kings, and Lord of lords.*”

A battle of this nature requires *extensive preparation*, and only those properly prepared can be victorious in the battle. This is the reason given in [Ephesians 4:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+4.11ff&t=NKJV) for the placement of pastor-teachers in the Church, and this is the reason given in [Ephesians 6:10ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.10ff&t=NKJV) for the battle-dress in which Christians are to be arrayed.

Christians entering into this conflict are to take unto themselves “*the whole armor of God.*” Nothing short of this will suffice, for Christians are able to withstand Satan’s attacks (are able to stand against the wiles of the devil) only in this manner.

Six items are listed for Christians to take in order to be properly clothed in the present conflict:

1) “*Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth* . . . .” ([Ephesians 6:14a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.14a&t=NKJV)).

There is no definite article before “truth.” This is not “the truth,” which is the Word of God. That appears later ([Ephesians 6:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.17&t=NKJV)).

The girdle is placed about the waist first, and the other pieces of armor are affixed to the girdle. Placing the girdle about the waist is with a view to the other pieces of armor also being taken and put on; and for a Christian to put on the girdle of truth can only be synonymous with a Christian entering the conflict in a truthful or sincere and earnest manner, looking ahead to continuing the process of putting on the armor, ultimately resulting in his being clothed with the whole armor of God.

Arraying one’s self with the girdle has to do with a Caleb-Joshua-type attitude toward the goal in view:

*. . . Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.* ([Numbers 13:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13.30&t=NKJV)).

2) “. . . *having put on the breastplate of righteousness*” ([Ephesians 6:14b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.14b&t=NKJV)).

Note that this is something that the Christian himself is to put on. This has nothing to do with the righteousness of Christ imputed to the Christian at the time of the birth from above. Rather, the “*breastplate of righteousness*” has to do with *right living*. It has to do with the “*righteous acts of the saints*” ([Revelation 19:8 ASV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.8&t=ASV)), which make up the wedding garment.

3) “*and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace*” ([Ephesians 6:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.15&t=NKJV)).

Note the emphasis in verses eleven, thirteen, and fourteen relative to *standing* as one goes forth to battle: “*to stand*” ([Ephesians 6:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.11&t=NKJV)), “*withstand* [*lit*., ‘stand against’],” “*to stand*” ([Ephesians 6:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.13&t=NKJV)), and “*Stand*” ([Ephesians 6:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.14&t=NKJV)). One must have solid footing to stand upon. Both feet must be firmly planted, “*shod . . . with the preparation* [‘readiness’] *of the gospel of peace*.”

There are two aspects to the gospel in Scripture. One appears in connection with “peace *with* God,” and the other appears in connection with “the peace *of* God.”

“Peace *with* God” comes about through justification by grace through faith, as seen in [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-9&t=NKJV): “*Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” ([Romans 5:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.1&t=NKJV)). This peace results from one being placed upon the foundation, with the most sure, steadfast footing possible, apart from which there can be no conflict.

However, distinctions between “peace *with* God” and “the peace *of* God” are not what is in view in [Ephesians 6:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.15&t=NKJV), for availing oneself of the proper footwear (for both feet) is something that, contextually, occurs following salvation.

In a parallel passage to that which is in view, the latter part of [Romans 10:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+10.15&t=NKJV) states,

*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!*

The feet are seen as the vehicle of transportation for the messenger, as he goes about proclaiming good news concerning *peace*. Within the overall scope of the good news, as previously stated, there is a facet of the message having to do with “*peace with God*” (for the unsaved [[Romans 5:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.1&t=NKJV)]) and there is a facet of the message having to do with the “*peace of God*” (for the saved [[Philippians 4:5-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+4.5-7&t=NKJV)]). The contextual emphasis in [Romans 10:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+10.15&t=NKJV) though has to do with *the saved*, not with the unsaved.

Exactly the same thought is in view regarding the armor in [Ephesians 6:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.15&t=NKJV). Having one’s feet properly shod has to do with proper preparation relative to the good news concerning *peace*, as it pertains to the saved, exactly as seen in [Romans 10:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+10.15&t=NKJV); and this would be based on the person already having “*peace with God*,” as seen in [Romans 5:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.1&t=NKJV).

The messenger’s feet being properly shod shows a proper preparation of the messenger as he goes about proclaiming this message concerning *peace*. And this message of peace would have two facets — the peace of God now (having to do with the present aspect of salvation, the outworking of the saving of the soul), culminating in a future peace when *the Prince of Peace* is Himself present (having to do with the future aspect of salvation, when the salvation of the soul will be realized).

4) *“Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one”* ([Ephesians 6:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.16&t=NKJV)).

“Faith” is simply *believing that which God has to say about a matter*. The weakness of the average Christian is lack of faith, which results from the neglect of prayerful study of and meditation in the Word of God. [Hebrews 11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11&t=NKJV), the great chapter on *faith*, provides the capstone to the first ten chapters of the book of Hebrews; and the opening two verses of chapter twelve ([Hebrews 12:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.1-2&t=NKJV) provide the capstone to all that is stated in [Hebrews 11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11&t=NKJV).

In these verses, Christians are exhorted to “*lay aside every weight* [every hindrance in the spiritual warfare], *and the sin which so easily ensnares us* [lack of faith, the besetting sin common to every Christian (*ref*. [Hebrews 11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11&t=NKJV))].” And in this manner alone Christians are to “*run with endurance*” the race set before them, “*looking to Jesus* [*lit*., looking from, to Jesus (*i.e*., looking from all that surrounds, to Jesus)] . . . .”

5) *“And take the helmet of salvation . . . .”* ([Ephesians 6:17a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.17a&t=NKJV)).

[1 Thessalonians 5:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.8&t=NKJV) reveals that this helmet is the “*hope of salvation*.” This is the salvation to be revealed (salvation of the soul) at the time Christ returns. The hope set before Christians is the hope of occupying a position with Christ in His coming kingdom. There is no other doctrine in the Word of God that will inspire and encourage a Christian more in the present conflict against Satan and his demons than the doctrine of “*that blessed hope*” ([Titus 2:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+2.12-13&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Colossians 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.5&t=NKJV), [27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.27&t=NKJV); [Titus 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+1.2&t=NKJV); [3:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+3.7&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 3:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.6&t=NKJV); [6:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.18&t=NKJV)).

6) “*and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*” ([Ephesians 6:17b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.17b&t=NKJV)).

Christ Himself, in the temptation account, demonstrated that the one great weapon to be used against Satan is the Word of God. Satan also knew and attested to the power of this Word when he attempted to use it against Christ ([Matthew 4:1-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.1-11&t=NKJV); [Luke 4:1-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+4.1-13&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Hebrews 4:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.12&t=NKJV)). David said, “*Your Word I have hid in mine heart that I might not sin against You*” ([Psalm 119:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+119.11&t=NKJV)). It is vitally important, it is imperative, that Christians *know and use the Word of God* in the present conflict.

Having properly clothed and armed themselves, Christians are to then be:

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.* ([Ephesians 6:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.18&t=NKJV))

Overcoming is a lifelong task, provision has been made, and proffered rewards await the victors. In the words of Paul, as he was moved [borne along] by the Holy Spirit, “*So run, that you may obtain*” ([1 Corinthians 9:24b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24b&t=NKJV)).

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Chapter 5

**The Tree of Life**

*And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden* . . . . ([Genesis 2:9a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.9a&t=NKJV))

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.* ([Revelation 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV))

The promise concerning those who overcome being granted the privilege of partaking of the tree of life is the first of seven overcomer’s promises in Revelation chapters two and three. These promises pertain *to Christians alone*, and the realization of these promises awaits *the future Messianic Era*.

The time when Christians will enter into the blessings associated with these promises *must* follow the time set forth in chapter one — Christ appearing as Judge in the midst of the seven churches. The Church *must first* be brought into judgment. *Then* overcoming Christians will realize that which has been promised.

The Seven Epistles

Overcoming in each of the seven promises is related to existing conditions in the particular church to which the promise is given. One promise though is not to be looked upon as standing alone and being peculiar to only one church. There are seven promises given to seven churches. “Seven” is a number showing *the completeness of that which is in view*. In this particular instance, the seven churches show *the complete Church* of [Matthew 16:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.18&t=NKJV); and the seven overcomer’s promises show *the completeness of that which has been promised to all Christians*, *with these promises to be realized by all overcoming Christians.*

The seven churches viewed together, as seen in these chapters, comprise an indivisible unit; and the seven overcomer’s promises viewed together, as presented in connection with Christians comprising these seven churches, are indivisibly related in such a manner that one cannot be realized apart from the other.

And viewing the overcomer’s promises in this manner that are seen throughout each epistle would have to be looked upon the same way. Different facets of truth, *applicable to all Christians throughout the seven churches*, are shown by and through the Lord’s comments on things that have been singled out in each epistle concerning a particular church.

1) Applicable to All

Viewing one facet of truth after this fashion, in the epistle to “*the church of* [in] *Ephesus*,” reference is made to *a departure from* “*your first love*” ([Revelation 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.4&t=NKJV)). The command is then given, “*Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works*.” This is followed by the warning that if *remembrance, repentance*, and *first works* do not follow, the “*lampstand* [church in Ephesus; *cf*. [Revelation 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.1&t=NKJV),[11-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11-13&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.20&t=NKJV)]]” will be removed from its place.

And this removal of the lampstand (KJV: candlestick) — this removal of the church in Ephesus, the Christians in Ephesus — is, contextually, *millennial* in its scope of fulfillment. This removal will occur at the judgment seat; and it has nothing to do with eternal verities, with one’s eternal salvation, etc. Nor do the warnings in the other epistles in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV). Rather, *millennial verities alone, as they relate to saved individuals*, are in view by that which is stated in these warnings.

The time element involved in the warnings would have to be the same as that which is seen in the overcomer’s promises, for the latter has to do with overcoming or being overcome relative to the former. And *millennial verities alone* are clearly revealed to be in view by and through that which is stated in several of the overcomer’s promises. Conditions which are seen in several of these promises will not exist beyond the Millennium, during the eternal ages (*e.g*., [Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV), [26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV); [3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV), [21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV)).

Following the warning to the church in Ephesus, reference is made to the “*Nicolaitans*” (an Anglicized form of the compound Greek word, *nikolaites* [from *nike*, “a victor,” “a conqueror”; and *laos*, “people”]). Thus, the word “*Nicolaitans*” means, “to conquer [be victorious over] the people.”

Within Church history, there is no record of a group of individuals known by the name, “*Nicolaitans*” — in the church in Ephesus, or in any other first-century church (note that a reference to the “*Nicolaitans*” is also repeated in the epistle to the church in Pergamos [[Revelation 2:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.15&t=NKJV)]). And, when coming across a reference of this nature, there is only one thing that can be done in order to understand that which the Lord meant by using this word (whether by Christians during the first century, or by Christians today). The use of “*Nicolaitans*” would have to be understood as a reference to *the actions of a group of individuals, described by the meaning of the word itself.*

From the meaning of the word, a reference to the “*Nicolaitans*” could only be understood as a reference to *individuals forming a hierarchy within the Church, ruling over the people*. And these individuals were undoubtedly responsible, at least in part, for the existing conditions in Ephesus near the end of the first century, as well as the conditions subsequently seen existing in Pergamos (and possibly in one or more of the other five churches, though this is not mentioned).

And the entire matter leads into the promise for those who overcome, *i.e.*, for those who *remember, repent*, and *do the first works*. These are the ones who will be allowed “*to eat from the tree of life*” during the Messianic Era ([Revelation 2:5-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.5-7&t=NKJV)).

All of these things, though directed to those in the church in Ephesus, would be applicable to those in any of the other six churches as well. And the inverse of that is equally true. The things written to those in each of the other six churches would be applicable to those in the church in Ephesus, or to those in any of the churches. That is, the things recorded in each of these seven epistles would be applicable to Christians everywhere.

2) The Dispensation

It is also evident that these seven epistles, by and through the manner in which they have been divinely arranged and structured, set forth truths within another realm. Viewed together, beginning with the church in Ephesus and ending with the church in Laodicea, it is evident that these epistles set forth a divinely revealed, overall view of Church history, covering the entire dispensation.

In this respect, the message to the church in Ephesus would reveal things concerning the Church at the beginning of the dispensation; the messages to the next five churches would continue from that point and reveal things concerning the Church throughout at least most of the remainder of the dispensation; and the message to the church in Laodicea would reveal things concerning the Church during the closing years of the dispensation.

(Revelation chapters two and three present one of only two places in Scripture where an overall view of the history of Christendom throughout the dispensation is given. The other was also given by Christ, but about sixty years earlier during His earthly ministry, preceding Calvary.

The earlier history of Christendom can be seen in the first four parables in Matthew chapter thirteen [*ref*. the author’s book, in this site, [Mysteries of the Kingdom BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-five.php#Mysteries%20of%20the%20Kingdom%20BOOK), Chapters 3-6]. And interestingly enough, both of these accounts center on a history of Christendom as it pertains to the “*word of the kingdom*” [[Matthew 13:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.19&t=NKJV)] — something that Church history books written by man *never even mention, much less center on*.

And until man understands the true nature of Church history, from the standpoint revealed in Matthew chapter thirteen and Revelation chapters two and three, he can never properly understand Church history. He can never properly understand why the Church, after almost 2,000 years of existence, has ended up in its present decadent state.

And, as a result, he can do little more than approach the whole matter from a position other than how it is handled in Scripture.)

Near the beginning of the Church’s existence on earth, as shown by the first of the seven epistles in Revelation chapters two and three, there was a departure of Christians from their first love. And this revealed something with far-reaching ramifications that would occur in Christendom during the early years of its existence. The time element is not given in the epistle, but it would have to be seen in conjunction with a general deterioration of spiritual conditions in Christendom, occurring over the first several centuries.

Christians during the early years of the Church were busily engaged in the Lord’s work as they waited, anticipated, and longed for His return. They *loved His appearing* (*cf*. [2 Timothy 4:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.8&t=NKJV)). But as time went on and the Lord remained in heaven, the leaven that the woman placed in the three measures of meal in [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV) began to do its damaging work, resulting in Christians gradually losing their first love. And the end result of the loss of this first love was the onset of what is known in Church history as “The Dark Ages.”

Although Christians departing from their first love emanates out of a sequence of events that fit into a framework of early Church history, this is not something peculiar to that period. Rather, this is something that has continued to exist since that time; and the attendant warning to Christians concerning the possibility of the lampstand being removed must extend throughout the entire period.

The retention or removal of the lampstand is contingent on overcoming or being overcome relative to the matter at hand ([Revelation 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV)). Eternal verities are not in view at all. The thought set forth in this passage projects the matter out into that time when Christ will deal with the Church in *judgment*, and retention or removal of the lampstand anticipates the Church as it will appear *following* the issues of the judgment seat of Christ.

3) Called, Called Out

The word *church* in the Greek text is a compound word (*ekklesia*, from *ek* and *kaleo*), which means “called out.” And the word is used in the New Testament in two senses:

1) As the Church appears *preceding* the issues of the judgment seat (which would be during the present dispensation [[Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)], or as the Church is seen before the judgment seat [[Revelation 1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-3&t=NKJV)]);

2) As the Church will appear *following* the issues of the judgment seat (which would be as the Church is seen in [Revelation 19:7-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.7-9&t=NKJV), as the bride of Christ [*cf*. [Hebrews 12:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.23&t=NKJV)]).

Only the “called” (all of the saved) can comprise the Church today (as it is looked upon in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)), for the “called out” are yet to be revealed and removed from the called. The Church will appear in the true sense of the word itself (*ekklesia*, “called out”) only after the “called out” have been removed from the “called,” which will occur following Christ dealing with all Christians at His judgment seat (note that all those being addressed in [Revelation 2:1-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.1-7&t=NKJV) are in the Church [as the Church presently appears], but some are in danger of being removed [as the Church will one day appear]).

Christ’s warning concerning the removal of the lampstand in [Revelation 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.5&t=NKJV) — the removal of the church in Ephesus, the Christians in Ephesus — must be understood in the light of the two ways in which the word “church” is used in Scripture. The message is to individuals in the Church as it appears today, which comprises all of the *called, all of the saved*, not just *the called out* (for the Church in the latter sense is yet to be revealed).

And any of the called who leave their “*first love*” and do not “*repent, and do the first works*,” cannot be among *the called out*. They cannot comprise the Church as it will appear in that coming day. Rather, they will *be removed*, spoken of elsewhere as *being disapproved* (Greek: *adokimos* [*cf*. [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.27&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+3.8&t=NKJV); [Titus 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+1.16&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 6:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.8&t=NKJV)]).

These two appearances of the Church present a sharp contrast in Scripture: The Church on earth immediately *preceding* its removal to appear before the judgment seat is described as “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” (which includes only those Christians alive at that time [[Revelation 3:14-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.14-18&t=NKJV)]); but the Church *following* the issues of the judgment seat is described as the “*glorious church* [the Church in her glory (the bride of Christ)], *not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing*” (which will include overcoming Christians from throughout the dispensation [[Ephesians 5:25-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+5.25-32&t=NKJV)]). And it is the Church in her glory, the bride of Christ ([Revelation 19:7-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.7-9&t=NKJV)), which will be extended the privilege of partaking of “*the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God*” ([Revelation 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV)).

The Church as it will exist in that coming day is referred to in [Hebrews 12:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.23&t=NKJV) as the “*church of the firstborn*.” The thought has to do with *a called out group of firstborn sons*. This moves matters beyond the adoption (the placement of firstborn sons) and presents the Church as being comprised only of individuals *called out of the body*, not individuals called out of the world (so to speak), as the Church is seen during the present day and time.

(Paul, in his church epistles, though he wrote to all of the saved in a particular locality, often worded matters more in keeping with the thought of the Church as it will appear in that coming day [as presented by the writer of Hebrews in [Hebrews 12:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.23&t=NKJV); *e.g*., [Romans 1:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.7-8&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 1:5-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.5-14&t=NKJV); [1 Thessalonians 1:5-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+1.5-10&t=NKJV); [5:1-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.1-9&t=NKJV)]. And this would be in complete keeping with Paul’s central message [pertaining to *the mystery*], which was *the central message* proclaimed throughout Christendom during the first century.)

The Church as it will exist in that coming day will appear in complete keeping with the type in [Genesis 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2&t=NKJV) — Eve formed from a part of Adam’s body, which had been removed from his body. The bride of Christ, in the antitype — synonymous with the Church as it will appear in that coming day — will be formed from a part of Christ’s body, which will have been removed from His body. All Christians together form the body of Christ, but all Christians cannot form the bride of Christ. *Only those removed from the body can form the bride.*

The type has been set, and the antitype *must* follow the type in exact detail. There can be no variance between the two. And the called out, in that day, forming *the bride*, will be placed as *firstborn sons* (*i.e*., be adopted), with a view to their occupying positions with Christ in the kingdom.

(For a more detailed discussion concerning the bride being removed from the body, refer to the author’s book, [Bible One - The Bride in Genesis by Arlen Chitwood](http://bibleone.net/BiG.htm), chapter 1, “Adam and Eve.”

Note that the Church is looked upon in that coming day in two respects in Scripture — as *a bride*, and as *a firstborn son*. These are simply two ways in which Scripture presents the matter. On the one hand, Christ must have a bride to reign as consort queen with Him; then, on the other hand, only *firstborn sons* can rule.

None of this is true in the angelic realm, only in the human realm. Angelic rulers are all sons, but not firstborn sons; and there can be no thought of marriage within the angelic realm itself, for all angels are of the same gender, referred to in a masculine respect.)

In Genesis, Proverbs, and Revelation

*The tree of life* is mentioned nine times in Scripture, in three different books — three times in Genesis ([Genesis 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.9&t=NKJV); [3:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.22&t=NKJV), [24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.24&t=NKJV)), four times in Proverbs ([Proverbs 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+3.18&t=NKJV); [11:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+11.30&t=NKJV); [13:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+13.12&t=NKJV); [15:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+15.4&t=NKJV)), and twice in the book of Revelation ([Revelation 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV); [22:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.2&t=NKJV)). But what was *the original purpose* for the tree of life (seen in Genesis), which will be realized yet future (seen in the book of Revelation)?

*The tree of life* was one of the numerous trees in the garden in Eden. And Adam, with Eve, was commanded to eat of all these trees, with the exception of one — “*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*” ([Genesis 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.9&t=NKJV), [16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.16-17&t=NKJV)). Adam, the first man, had been created for the specific purpose of assuming *the rulership over the earth*, and the fruit of the tree of life was singled out as *a specific provision* for man as he exercised this rule.

An evident connection between man’s rule and his partaking of the tree of life can be seen by noting *the appearance of this tree* in the beginning when man was in a position to rule, *the absence of this tree* during the entire period when man is not in a position to rule (aside from the tree being referenced in Proverbs), and *the reappearance of this tree* in the book of Revelation when man will be brought back into a position to rule (*cf*. [Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV); [Revelation 2:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26&t=NKJV), [27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.27&t=NKJV)).

The period during which man has been banned from eating of the tree of life *began* following Adam’s fall, resulting in his disqualification to rule; and this period will end following the issues of the judgment seat, at which time man will once again find himself in a position to rule.

Adam, following the fall, was driven from the garden to prevent his partaking of the tree of life. Adam could not be permitted to eat of this tree in a fallen condition, for had such occurred, Adam, in a fallen state, would have realized that which fruit from this tree was meant to provide. Thus, not only did God remove Adam from the garden, but He placed “*cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life* [to prevent fallen man from reentering the garden and partaking of this tree]” ([Genesis 3:22-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.22-24&t=NKJV)).

Studying [Genesis 3:22-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.22-24&t=NKJV) apart from the context and related Scripture could lead one to believe that the purpose for the tree of life was to provide perpetuity of life for Adam in his unfallen state. However, such could not have been the case at all. “Death” *did not* enter into the picture until *after* Adam’s sin ([Genesis 2:15-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.15-17&t=NKJV); [3:6ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.6ff&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Romans 6:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+6.23&t=NKJV)), at which time he was barred from the tree of life.

Adam had lived in an *undying state* prior to his sin, as he continued to live in an antithetical *dying state* following his sin; and to say that the tree of life was given to Adam in his un-fallen state to provide perpetuity of life, preventing death, cannot possibly be correct. Nor could it possibly be correct to say that the tree of life would have had anything to do with providing *physical life* (keeping Adam alive physically) following the fall. A tree can produce only “*after its kind*” ([Genesis 1:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.11-12&t=NKJV)). In this respect, *fruit* from the tree of life simply *could not have produced one result before man’s fall and another following man’s fall.*

In [Revelation 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV), partaking of the tree of life has been promised to the overcomers from among those *already possessing* eternal life. Consequently, in this passage, the tree of life can have nothing whatsoever to do with perpetuity of life; and it is the same in the Genesis account when man was first brought upon the scene to rule and to reign.

The tree of life in both [Genesis 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3&t=NKJV) and [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV) appears in a different setting entirely. The tree of life reserved for Christians is associated peculiarly with a provision *for those who will rule and reign as co-heirs with Chris*t; and viewing Adam’s position in the Genesis account — *created to rule and reign*, in possession of an unending life, with the fruit of the tree of life at his disposal — the same thought concerning *regality in connection with the tree of life* would hold true. Thus, Adam in a fallen state, *no longer in a position to rule*, could not be allowed to eat of the tree of life, for fruit from this tree would provide “life” in relation to *regality*.

This whole overall thought concerning the tree of life in Scripture *would have to hold true*, for that which is seen relative to this tree *in Revelation chapter two* is drawn from that which was *first* seen relative to this tree *in Genesis chapters two and three*. The fruit of the tree of life *was in the past* (seen in the book of Genesis) and *will be in the future* (seen in the book of Revelation) *a provision for the rulers in the kingdom. This is an evident fact that must be recognized.*

And, in that coming day following the Millennium, the tree of life will be for “*the healing of the nations*” ([Revelation 22:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.2&t=NKJV)). The Greek word translated “*healing*” is *therapeia*, from which the English word “therapy” is derived. This is a medical term that has to do with *restorative healing*. In that day, God will *restore all of saved mankind to the original place that man occupied at the time of his creation*. And, consequently, *the whole of saved mankind, with regality in view, will have access to the tree of life.*

During the preceding Messianic Era, the tree of life will have been made available to overcoming Christians ([Revelation 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV)), those ruling and reigning as co-heirs with Christ. And this tree will probably be made available to certain others at this time as well, others occupying regal positions with Christ in His reign from the heavens over the earth (e.g., certain Old Testament saints, Tribulation martyrs [[Matthew 8:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+8.11-12&t=NKJV); [Revelation 20:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4-6&t=NKJV)]).

But following the Messianic Era, in the eternal ages, this tree is seen being made available to the nations of the earth, something that would have been completely out of place during the Millennium. And this will be an apparent end result of Israel’s evangelistic endeavors during the Millennium, along with Christ’s rule with a rod of iron during this time.

Man was created in the beginning *to rule and to reign*. And though only a part of saved mankind will have been brought back into a position to occupy the throne at the beginning of the Millennium (with the tree of life being made available to them at this time), at the end of the Millennium the whole of saved mankind will be brought back into this position (with the tree of life being made available to them at this time).

Wisdom, Understanding

*Happy is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding;*

*For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver and her gain than fine gold.*

*She is more precious than rubies and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.*

*Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor.*

*Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

*She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her.* ([Proverbs 3:13-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+3.13-18&t=NKJV))

Following the introduction to “*the tree of life*” in the opening chapters of Genesis, there are only *four references* to this tree throughout Scripture until one arrives at [Revelation 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV). Solomon used the expression “*a tree of life*” four times in the book of Proverbs ([Proverbs 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+3.18&t=NKJV); [11:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+11.30&t=NKJV); [13:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+13.12&t=NKJV); [15:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+15.4&t=NKJV)); and it is within this revelation given through Solomon that one finds the connection between the tree of life in the books of Genesis and Revelation.

And through putting all of this together, the reason then becomes apparent why this tree, with its fruit, was among the trees provided for Adam and Eve to eat in their unfallen state, and why fruit from this tree is being reserved for overcoming Christians to eat of during the Messianic Era.

(Then, there is also a connection between this tree and the complete restoration of the nations of the earth beyond the Messianic Era, with all of mankind realizing the purpose for man’s creation in the beginning [[Revelation 22:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.2&t=NKJV)]. For additional information on this subject, refer to the author’s book, in this site, [The Time of the End BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-in-revelation.php#The%20Time%20of%20the%20End), Chapter 36, “The Eternal Ages.”)

In the first of these four passages, *wisdom* and *understanding* are said to be “*a tree of life*.” Viewing this in the light of the wisdom and understanding possessed by Solomon as he ruled over Israel is the association provided by Scripture to correctly understand *one facet* of the tree of life. *Solomon possessed wisdom and understanding as he ruled; and Christians must, in like manner, possess wisdom and understanding as they rule, as would have been necessary for Adam had he ruled.*

1) Solomon Properly Equipped

Shortly after Solomon ascended the throne following the death of David, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “*Ask! What shall I give you?*” Solomon, recognizing that he was but as a “*little child*” in understanding the affairs of state within the kingdom over which he ruled, asked for *wisdom* and *knowledge*. Solomon asked God for the ability to judge the people of Israel in equity, justice, and righteousness.

Such a request pleased the Lord, and Solomon was granted not only “*a wise and understanding heart*” but also “*riches and honor*.” His ability to rule, his material wealth, and the respect that he commanded — all coming from the hand of the Lord — would later be shown to exceed that of any king upon the face of the earth ([1 Kings 3:5-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+3.5-15&t=NKJV); [2 Chronicles 1:7-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Chronicles+1.7-17&t=NKJV)).

Solomon’s ability to judge among his people in a unique manner by and through the wisdom and knowledge that the Lord had bestowed began to be displayed by a decision that he rendered concerning two women and a child. These two women dwelled alone in the same house, and both had given birth to sons, one three days before the other. The son born last died one night because his mother lay upon him; and as the other mother slept with her son at her side, the mother of the dead child took the living child from his mother’s side and placed the dead child in its stead. However, upon awakening, the mother now in possession of the dead child realized that the child was not hers and found that her child was still alive and being claimed by the other mother. Not being able to resolve the matter between themselves, their case was brought before Solomon.

Solomon was told what had allegedly occurred; and as he listened to both women claiming the living child, he was unable to ascertain which one was the true mother. He then called for a sword and commanded that the child be divided into two parts, giving half to each woman. Solomon, in his wisdom, knew that the true mother would be revealed through the actions that each woman would take when they heard his decision.

And this is exactly what occurred. The true mother pleaded for the child’s life, telling Solomon to not harm the child but to give him to the other woman. The other woman, whose child had died, on the other hand, insisted that the child be divided. Solomon then knew which of the two was telling the truth, and the child was returned to his true mother ([1 Kings 3:16-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+3.16-27&t=NKJV)).

Solomon’s wisdom in this matter spread throughout all Israel and the people “*feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice*.” Not only did God give Solomon wisdom to judge in all matters, but Solomon possessed wisdom of such a nature that it spread throughout the entire known world. His wisdom “*excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men . . . and his fame was in all the surrounding nations . . . And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon*” ([1 Kings 3:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+3.28&t=NKJV); [4:29-34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+4.29-34&t=NKJV)). The queen of Sheba came “*to test him with hard questions*” ([1 Kings 10:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+10.1ff&t=NKJV)), and in the end stated,

*It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom.*

*However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard.* ([1 Kings 10:6-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+10.6-7&t=NKJV) [6b])

2) Christians Properly Equipped

The wisdom and understanding that Solomon possessed as he ruled in the kingdom of Israel (associated with “*a tree of life*”) provides the central reason why the tree of life is found in association with Adam’s rule in Genesis and with the Christians’ rule yet future. The fruit of this tree *would have provided* (for Adam) and *will provide* (for Christians) the necessary wisdom and understanding to govern in equity, justice, and righteousness.

God’s bestowal of *wisdom, understanding, riches, wealth*, and *honor* upon Solomon typifies that which He will bestow upon overcoming Christians during the coming age. By and through the fruit of the tree of life, God will provide the necessary *wisdom* and *understanding* to rule in the kingdom; through being co-heirs with God’s Son, Christians will come into possession of unlimited *riches* and *wealth*, for all the Father’s possessions will belong to the Son; and in these positions, Christians will realize a status of *honor* and *glory* befitting those elevated to such noble rank ([Genesis 24:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.10&t=NKJV), [36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.36&t=NKJV), [53](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.53&t=NKJV); [John 16:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+16.13-15&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9-11&t=NKJV); [4:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.12-13&t=NKJV); [Revelation 4:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.11&t=NKJV); [5:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.12&t=NKJV)).

The tree of life in Eden was a literal tree with literal fruit, as will be the tree of life in the New Jerusalem following the millennium ([Revelation 22:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.2&t=NKJV)). However, there is a possibility that the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God, reserved for Christians during the millennium, may not be a literal tree as such. There is a sense in which Christ Himself is the Tree of Life, a tree upon which Christians will one day feed, similar to the feeding upon Christ seen in [John 6:48-56](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+6.48-56&t=NKJV).

But, a feeding upon Christ in relation to the tree of life could only be at *a future time alone*. Scripture associates a present feeding in this respect with “manna,” not with a “tree.” The tree of life is located *in the paradise of God* and is connected with *regality*, something from which Christians are presently *estranged*.

This is *not the day* when Christians are to rule and reign. *That day* lies in the future. Thus, any feeding upon Christ today could not be associated with the tree of life. Rather, it would have to be associated with manna.

(As previously seen in [Genesis 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.12&t=NKJV), God introduced something concerning trees which is *unchangeable*. Trees that yield fruit will *always* yield their fruit “*according to its kind*.”

The tree of life is located in *the paradise of Go*d and is associated with *regality*; and fruit born by this tree must be viewed accordingly. The tree will bear fruit “*according to its kind*,” associated with *the paradise of God* and with *regality*; and this fruit can be eaten by man *only after he finds himself exercising regality in the paradise of God, during the Messianic Era*.)

Insofar as a feeding upon manna with respect to Christ, note the third overcomer’s promise ([Revelation 2:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.17&t=NKJV)). The Israelites fed upon literal manna in the wilderness, but Christ is the Manna upon which Christians feed. Christ is “*the bread of life*”; and we *“eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood*.” Through this process, we acquire that *wisdom* that comes from above; or, as Scripture states, “*Christ . . . became* [‘has become’] *for us wisdom* . . . .” ([John 6:48-58](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+6.48-58&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+1.30&t=NKJV); *cf*. [1 Corinthians 2:6-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.6-10&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.8&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.9&t=NKJV), [28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.28&t=NKJV)).

Christ is the Living Word that came down from heaven; and feeding upon the Living Word is accomplished by and through feeding upon the inseparable Written Word. In Christ are “*hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” ([Colossians 2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+2.3&t=NKJV)); and feeding upon Him, through the Written Word, allows us to develop and grow, becoming more and more like Him through acquiring this wisdom and knowledge.

Wisdom and knowledge acquired during the present time though *is not for the purpose of equipping Christians to rule and reign*. We are living during the time Christ is in heaven, with the present existing kingdom under the dominion and control of Satan. Wisdom and knowledge presently being acquired is for *the sole purpose of equipping Christians to carry on the Lord’s business during His time of absence.*

Wisdom and knowledge of a nature that will equip Christians to rule and reign will be acquired only from the “*tree of life*” in the midst of the paradise of God. If this is a reference to Christ Himself, such a feeding upon Christ can only refer to something that is not available today but reserved for the overcomers during the coming age. Christians allowed to eat of the “*tree of life*” in that day will, by and through eating of this tree, be properly equipped for carrying on the Lord’s business following His return when He is revealed as “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*”; and Christians carrying on His business then will do so by and through reigning as co-heirs with Him.

John, in two of the books that he wrote — the gospel of John and the book of Revelation — deals with the entire matter of saved individuals partaking of manna during the present time and partaking of both, the “*tree of life*” and “*hidden manna*,” yet future. Six of the eight times that John deals with man partaking after the preceding fashions have to do with man partaking of manna during the present time, during man’s 6,000-year day. And the seventh and eighth times have to do with man partaking of the tree of life and hidden manna during a future time, during the Lord’s 1,000-year day, during the Messianic Era.

(For more information on “the hidden manna,” refer to Chapter 7 in this book.)

The six eating’s occurring during man’s 6,000-year day are seen in the gospel of John:

1) *Life* — spiritual life, a passing “*from death to life*” — derived through the One who said “*I am the resurrection, and the life*” ([John 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.4&t=NKJV); [10:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+10.10&t=NKJV); [11:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+11.25&t=NKJV)).

2) *Food* — the “*bread of life*” ([John 6:35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+6.35&t=NKJV)).

3) *Water* — the “*living water*” ([John 4:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+4.14&t=NKJV); [7:37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+7.37&t=NKJV)).

4) *Breath* — a continued breathing beyond the Spirit breathing life into the one having no life at the beginning ([John 20:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+20.22&t=NKJV)).

5) *Light* — the “*light of life*” ([John 8:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+8.12&t=NKJV)).

6) *Dwelling Place* — abiding “*in the vine*” ([John 15:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+15.1-5&t=NKJV)).

But the Lord’s 1,000-year day will follow Man’s Day; and John dealt with man eating during this day through reference to both “*the tree of life*” and “*hidden manna*,” providing a seventh and an eighth eating of Christ within that which he later wrote, recorded in the book of Revelation:

1) *The Tree of Life* — related to *regality* and *a future inheritance in Christ’s kingdom* ([Revelation 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV)).

2) *The Hidden Manna* — also related to *regality* and *a future inheritance in Christ’s kingdom* ([Revelation 2:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.17&t=NKJV)).

Then, as previously seen, a reference to “*the tree of life*” in association with the ages beyond the Messianic Era is also seen at the end of this same book ([Revelation 22:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.2&t=NKJV)).

Fruit of the Righteous

*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he who wins souls is wise*. ([Proverbs 11:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+11.30&t=NKJV))

The second mention of the “*tree of life*” in the book of Proverbs is in connection with *righteousness* and *soul*-*winning*. This is the identical connection one will find in the New Testament when studying the Christians’ association with the tree of life.

The “righteous” in [Proverbs 11:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+11.30&t=NKJV) are the ones who will be allowed to eat of the tree of life. With respect to Christians, such righteousness cannot be looked upon as synonymous with the imputed righteousness of Christ received at the time one was saved, for every Christian possesses this righteousness. But, as is plainly revealed in [Revelation 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV), not every Christian will be allowed to eat of the tree of life. The righteousness in this verse can only have to do with “*the righteous acts of the saints*,” which form the wedding garment. The “righteous” are those Christians who will be properly clothed at the marriage supper of the Lamb ([Revelation 19:7-9, ASV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.7-9&t=ASV)). These are the Christians who will comprise the Church consisting of firstborn sons ([Hebrews 12:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.23&t=NKJV)) and subsequently enter into the kingdom in positions of power and authority with Christ ([Matthew 24:45-47](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.45-47&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Matthew 24:48-51](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.48-51&t=NKJV)).

Soul-winning in the New Testament is largely misunderstood in Christian circles today. The common terminology, which is not at all correct, is to equate soul-winning with carrying the message of salvation by grace to the unsaved. In fact, equating soul-winning with the message of salvation by grace serves only to obscure both issues, leaving one hopelessly mired in a sea of misinterpretation. Soul-winning is one thing, and proclaiming the message of salvation by grace is another. The former has to do with the saved, and the latter has to do with the unsaved. The messages involved in both issues MUST be kept separate and distinct, which necessitates Christians understanding proper distinctions in these two realms.

Salvation by grace, carried to the unsaved, is the presentation of the simple gospel message. The unsaved are to be told “*that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures*” ([1 Corinthians 2:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.1-2&t=NKJV); [15:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.3&t=NKJV)). Christ has paid the penalty for sin. The work of redemption has been accomplished on man’s behalf, and God is satisfied. Provision has been made for unredeemed man to be saved by receiving that which Christ has done on his behalf. And he does this by simply *believing on the Lord Jesus Christ* ([Acts 16:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+16.31&t=NKJV)).

Redeemed man, on the other hand, is to hear an entirely different message. He is to be taught *the reason* for his salvation. He is to be told that Christ has *gone away “to receive for Himself a kingdom”*; he is to be told that *during the time of his Lord’s absence* he is to be busy with the talents and pounds that the Lord delivered to and left in charge of His servants (Christians); he is to be told that *a day of reckoning* is coming; he is to be told that *the Lord will return to judge His servants* on the basis of their faithfulness in carrying out His business during His time of absence; and he is to be told that *the outcome of this judgment* will determine every Christians’ position in the coming kingdom ([Matthew 25:14-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.14-30&t=NKJV); [Luke 19:11-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.11-27&t=NKJV)).

And it is within this overall message to the saved that one finds the salvation of the soul taught in Scripture, not within the message of salvation by grace, proclaimed to the unsaved.

“Soul-winning” has to do with *winning those who are already saved to a life of faithfulness to the Lord*. “Soul-winning” is *winning one’s life*. This involves winning Christians (those possessing “life”) to be occupied with the Lord’s business during His time of absence, anticipating His return. And more specifically, this involves winning Christians to be occupied in this manner with that portion of the Lord’s business delivered to them personally.

Illustrated in the parables of the talents and the pounds, one servant was responsible only for bringing forth an increase in the talents or the pounds *that had been placed in his possession*, not in those that had been placed in another servant’s possession. Issues and determinations resulting from the judgment seat will be based strictly on *the evaluation of works performed by Christians in complete keeping with that set forth in these two parables.*

Direct references to the salvation of the soul are found in New Testament passages such as [Matthew 16:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.24-27&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 10:38-39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.38-39&t=NKJV); [James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV); [5:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+5.19-20&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9-11&t=NKJV) and are always spoken of in a future sense within a context dealing with those who are already saved. Soul-winning is associated *with the righteous acts of the saints, with overcoming, and with one day being extended the privilege of eating of the tree of life*. This is the reason that soul-winning is found within a context of this nature in [Proverbs 11:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+11.30&t=NKJV). It is *the wise* who win souls (win lives).

*Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.* ([Daniel 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+12.3&t=NKJV))

Hope Realized

*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.* ([Proverbs 13:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+13.12&t=NKJV))

The third mention of the “*tree of life*” in the book of Proverbs is in connection with *hope* that is realized. There is no tree of life as long as one’s hope is deferred. Only when “*the desire comes* [hope is realized]” does the tree of life come into view.

This thought from the book of Proverbs is in perfect accord with the Christians’ present hope in the light of the two previous references to the tree of life in this book. Christians have been “*begotten*” from above to a “*living hope*” through the “*resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*.” Christ lives, and Christians will live with Him. But this fact is not the object of one’s hope. Hope is described as “*living*” because of resurrection, but hope itself lies in things beyond resurrection. These things are revealed as an “*inheritance*” and a “*salvation*” ([1 Peter 1:3-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.3-5&t=NKJV)).

“*Hope*,” “*inheritance*,” and “*salvation*” are inseparably linked in Scripture. It is only because we are saved (passive, salvation of the spirit) that we can possess a “*hope*.” And the hope that Christians possess looks ahead to the reception of an inheritance within a salvation (future, salvation of the soul) to be revealed.

The “*blessed hope*” in [Titus 2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+2.13&t=NKJV) is one of the more familiar passages written to Christians in this respect. This hope is often said to be the return of Christ, but that’s not what this or any other passage in the New Testament dealing with the Christians’ hope teaches at all. *Hope*, as in [Titus 2:13 ASV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+2.13&t=ASV), is associated with the “*appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*”.

The construction of the Greek text in [Titus 2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+2.13&t=NKJV) actually makes *hope* synonymous with *the appearing of Christ’s glory*. Christians are the ones who possess this hope, as they are the ones who will participate in Christ’s glory when it is revealed. In this respect, participation in the coming glory of Christ will be the realization of one’s present hope, for one cannot be separated from the other.

Christians realizing their present hope, and the overcomers in [Revelation 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV) who will be allowed to eat of the “*tree of life*,” are one and the same. This is the reason [Proverbs 13:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+13.12&t=NKJV) teaches that *hope realized* is “*a tree of life*.” Those Christians one day coming into a realization of their present hope will be the ones who constitute the rulers in the kingdom, the ones allowed to eat of the tree of life to equip them for service in their respective capacities in the kingdom.

A Wholesome Tongue

*A wholesome* [‘tranquil’] *tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit*. ([Proverbs 15:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+15.4&t=NKJV))

The epistle of James in the New Testament forms the commentary for the fourth and last mention of the “*tree of life*” in the book of Proverbs, demonstrating a number of things about the use of the tongue and showing the connection between [Proverbs 15:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+15.4&t=NKJV) and the three previous references to the tree of life in this book. James is an epistle dealing strictly with the salvation of the soul, providing certain indispensable information necessary for a proper understanding of this all-important subject. The tree of life, on the other hand, is reserved for those Christians realizing the salvation of their souls; and a proper understanding of the tree of life is integrally related to a proper understanding of this salvation.

James mentions the tongue in chapter one ([James 1:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.26-27&t=NKJV)) and then goes into a lengthy discourse in chapter three concerning this small member of the body and what it is capable of doing ([James 3:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+3.1ff&t=NKJV)):

*Even so the tongue . . . boasts great things. . . .is a fire, a world of iniquity. . . . it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell* [Gehenna] . . . *no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison*. ([James 3:5-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+3.5-8&t=NKJV))

A Christian’s spirituality can be seen through the control of his tongue, for the tongue can be properly controlled only through the use of that *wisdom* and *knowledge* that comes from above ([James 3:13-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+3.13-18&t=NKJV)). This thought from the epistle of James takes one back to [Proverbs 3:13-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+3.13-18&t=NKJV), where *wisdom* and *knowledge* are associated with the tree of life. And it is in this same respect that “a wholesome tongue” also finds its association with the tree of life. A wholesome (tranquil) tongue results from the proper use of divinely imparted *wisdom* and *knowledge*.

Concluding Thoughts:

Man’s rule over the earth must wait for the time when [Revelation 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.7&t=NKJV) will be brought to pass. He that “*overcomes*” will realize *the salvation of his soul* (life), realize *that blessed hope*, come into possession of *the required wisdom and knowledge necessary to rule as a co-regent with Christ in the kingdom*, and be shown to have *a wholesome tongue* [a tranquil tongue] in this rule.

This is what Scripture teaches concerning the presence of the tree of life in Eden, *the absence* of the tree of life in the world today, and the coming inheritance of the saints, when Christians *will be allowed to “eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”*

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Chapter 6

**The Second Death**

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.* ([Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV))

The words of the Spirit of God to the church in Smyrna carry a special message to Christians who find themselves passing through times of various trials and testing during their pilgrim walk. The Christians in Smyrna had been called upon to suffer, but not without cause or recompense. “Suffering” is God’s *refining fire*, and those passing through the fire in Smyrna were extended a promise: “*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*” ([Revelation 2:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.9-10&t=NKJV)).

The overcomers’ promise then comes into view, stating simply and explicitly that overcoming Christians in Smyrna would “*not be hurt by the second death*” ([Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV)).

The sufferings which Christians in Smyrna were called upon to endure are summed up in the words, “. . . the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days” ([Revelation 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.10&t=NKJV)).

Over the years there have been numerous interpretations concerning the ten days of suffering in [Revelation 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.10&t=NKJV). Some expositors have called attention to ten periods of Roman persecution during the first three centuries of the Church’s existence and have sought to establish a correlation between the ten days in this verse and these ten periods in Church history, making each day represent a period of time. Other expositors have sought to apply the ten days to a ten-year persecution during one of these periods, making each day represent one year. Still other expositors have taken the number “ten” as symbolic, representing a limited but undefined period, usually within the larger period covered by the ten persecutions.

Regardless of how one looks upon the ten days of tribulation within a possible historical framework, the significance of the number “ten” *must* be taken into account. “Ten” is the number of *ordinal completion*, pointing to *all the days of tribulation*. And if these ten days are to be thought of in connection with the ten periods of Roman persecution, they would have to be thought of as showing *completion* in relation to persecution by the Roman Empire.

But, regardless of how one views the matter relative to persecution by the Roman Empire, the thought encompassed in the number “ten” *must*, *of necessity, go beyond these persecutions*. The seven Churches of Revelation chapters two and three are indivisibly related, revealing messages and promises to Christians throughout the dispensation; and the “ten days,” in their numerical sense, *must cover the complete period — the entire dispensation*. These days *must applicably refer to all trials and testing coming upon all Christians throughout the dispensation.*

Trials and testing are *the norm* for the Christian life, not the exception. The epistles of James and 1 Peter have been written to encourage Christians passing through times of trials and testing by holding out before them prizes, rewards, compensations, which are intimately associated with the salvation to be revealed — *the salvation of the soul* ([James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9&t=NKJV)).

This is the identical thought expressed in the overcomer’s promise to the church in Smyrna. A “*crown of life*” is in view, and the recipient of this crown is given the assurance that he will “*not be hurt of the second death*.”

The epistle of James begins its message with the statement, “*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials*.” Why? Trials and testing of this nature “*produces patience* [‘patient endurance’].” And allowing this patient endurance to have “*its perfect work* [end-time work],” Christians will become “*perfect* [mature] *and complete, lacking nothing*” ([James 1:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.2-4&t=NKJV)). Christians are to look upon such trials in the same manner as the apostles looked upon trials that confronted them. The apostles, in circumstances of this or a similar nature, *rejoiced* that “*they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His* [Christ’s] *name*” ([Acts 5:41](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+5.41&t=NKJV)).

The Christian patiently enduring temptations after the fashion seen in [James 1:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.2-4&t=NKJV) is promised in verse twelve that “*when he has been approved* [at the judgment seat], *he shall receive the crown of life*,” a parallel statement to [Revelation 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.10&t=NKJV). In both instances it is patiently enduring temptations, trials, and testing during the present time, with a crown of life in view; and this crown of life will be awarded *following one’s approval* at the judgment seat.

Crowns must be won through patiently enduring temptations, trials, and testing during the present “*race of the faith*” ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-27&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 6:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.11-12&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 4:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.7-8&t=NKJV)). And forfeiture of the proffered crown — resulting in non-approval at the judgment seat — *is a very real possibility*. Note the warning in this respect:

*Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown*. ([Revelation 3:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.11&t=NKJV))

Apart from the thought that a Christian can forfeit his crown, this verse would hold little meaning whatsoever. Christians, receiving or not receiving crowns await decisions and determinations at the judgment seat. Overcoming Christians will wear the crowns that they have won in the present race of the faith while occupying positions of power and authority with Christ during the coming age; but for non-overcoming Christians, the matter will be entirely different. *No uncrowned person will rule as co-heir with Christ in the kingdom.*

Manner of Usage in Revelation

The expression “*the second death*” is peculiar to the book of Revelation, and it appears four times in this book ([Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV); [20:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.6&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.14&t=NKJV); [21:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.8&t=NKJV)). The expression is used *twice* in texts where the word “*overcomes*” is used ([Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV); [21:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.7-8&t=NKJV)), *once* in connection with those who are martyred during the Tribulation (“*beheaded for their witness to Jesus, and for the Word of God* . . . .” [[Revelation 20:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4-6&t=NKJV)], with the thought of *overcoming* again seen), and *once* in connection with the unsaved dead from throughout Man’s Day ([Revelation 20:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.11-15&t=NKJV)). The expression “*the second death*” is defined in [Revelation 20:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.14&t=NKJV); [21:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.8&t=NKJV) as being “*cast into the lake of fire*” and as having a “*part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone*.”

It is evident in [Revelation 20:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.14&t=NKJV) that “*the second death*” is used referring to the unsaved, and it is equally evident that this expression is used in the other three passages in the book of Revelation ([Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV); [20:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.6&t=NKJV); [21:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.8&t=NKJV)) referring to the saved in connection with *overcoming* (not subsequently being hurt of the second death) or *being overcome* (and subsequently being hurt of the second death).

1) Overcomers will not be hurt by . . . .

The “*cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars*” in [Revelation 21:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.8&t=NKJV) are usually looked upon by students of Scripture as a reference to unredeemed individuals, synonymous with the ones previously seen in [Revelation 20:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.11-15&t=NKJV). However, contextually, this *cannot* be the case at all. The subject in verse seven, leading into verse eight, is *overcoming and realizing an inheritance in the kingdom as a son*.

(Reference is made to these overcoming martyrs ruling and reigning with Christ for 1,000 years [[Revelation 20:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4-6&t=NKJV)]. Only *sons* can rule in God’s kingdom [*cf*. [Job 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Job+1.6&t=NKJV); [2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Job+2.1&t=NKJV); [Luke 3:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+3.38&t=NKJV); [Romans 8:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.18-19&t=NKJV)], and *ruling in the kingdom* is spoken of at times as *realizing an inheritance in the kingdom* [[Ephesians 1:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.14&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.18&t=NKJV); [5:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+5.5&t=NKJV); [Colossians 3:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+3.24&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.4&t=NKJV)].)

Verse eight simply describes the “*unbelieving* [‘unfaithful’]” ones (*cf*. [Luke 12:46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+12.46&t=NKJV)) — the non-overcomers — and reveals that which will be their lot following their appearance before the Lord in judgment.

A similar description of individuals to that of [Revelation 21:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.8&t=NKJV) appears in [1 Corinthians 6:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+6.8-10&t=NKJV), where an *inheritance* in the kingdom is also in view:

*No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!*

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals* [the word, contextually, refers to male prostitutes], *nor sodomites* [homosexuals, the last of four references to different types of sexually immoral individuals],

*nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God*. ([1 Corinthians 6:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+6.8-10&t=NKJV))

In this section of Scripture, the text clearly reveals that *Christians alone are in view*. The words “*you yourselves do wrong*” in verse eight [referring to the manner of living of the “*brethren*” in the Corinthian church]), leading into verses nine and ten, are a translation of the Greek verb *adikeo*. The noun form of this word (*adikos*) then appears in verse nine (translated “*unrighteous*”), establishing a connection with verse eight that provides the proper identification of the individuals Paul is addressing in verses nine and ten.

In verse eight, Paul calls attention to the fact that certain Christians in the Corinthian church were conducting their affairs in an unrighteous manner.

(Those referenced in these verses, of necessity, would have to be saved individuals, for they were part of the church in Corinth. Scripture recognizes “the Church” as comprised of *the saved alone*, never a mixture of saved and unsaved individuals.

The thought of both saved and unsaved individuals comprising a church is solely man’s ideology, and it is an ideology that is completely foreign to any use of the word “church [Greek: *ekklesia*]” in Scripture. *Ekklesia* means “called out,” and that which is referred to through the use this word during the present dispensation would be *a group of individuals called out of the world* — something that could never include the unsaved.)

Continuing this same line of thought from verse eight into verse nine, Paul asks the question, “*Do you not know that the unrighteous* [a reference to Christians from [1 Corinthians 6:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+6.8&t=NKJV)] *will not inherit the kingdom of God?*” The remainder of verse nine, along with verse ten, then lists a number of unrighteous acts in which it is possible for Christians to become involved, concluding with the statement in verse ten that those engaged in unrighteous living of this nature “*will not inherit the kingdom of God*.”

The subject at hand, *inheritance in the kingdom*, rather than eternal life, should be carefully noted. Only Christians are presently in line to either receive or be denied this inheritance: “*If children, then heirs* . . . .” ([Romans 8:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.17&t=NKJV)). A person must be a child of God, a child of the Owner, a Christian (or he must have been an Israelite in the past dispensation), before inheritance in the kingdom can even come into view.

These sections of Scripture in [1 Corinthians 6:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+6.8-10&t=NKJV) and the book of [Revelation 21:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.7-8&t=NKJV) are actually companion passages. In both passages, those being addressed (Christians) and the matter being discussed (inheriting or being disinherited, with the kingdom in view) are *the same*. There is no message to the unsaved in these verses, for the issues of eternal life or eternal damnation are not present; and this *fact* must be recognized, else teachings surrounding inheritance in the kingdom, conveyed by the passages, will be missed entirely.

[Revelation 21:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.8&t=NKJV) cannot be equated with [Revelation 20:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.14&t=NKJV), even though both verses refer to “*the lake of fire*” and “*the second death*.” These two verses are not dealing with the same thing, the same individuals, or even the same time period. [Revelation 21:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.8&t=NKJV) deals with the judgment of the saved *preceding* the Millennium, with *millennial verities* in view; and [Revelation 20:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.14&t=NKJV) deals with the judgment of the unsaved *following* the Millennium, with *eternal verities* in view. Nothing is the same in the two passages, save the existence of *the same lake of fire*, with an associated *second death.*

The seven overcomer’s promises in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV) reveal different facets of that which God has promised to those who overcome the three great enemies confronting every Christian — the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *devil* (*ref*. chapter 4 of this book). The promise to the overcomer in the church in Smyrna that he would not be “*hurt by the second death*” is only one facet of the larger scope covered by *all of the overcomer’s promises to the seven churches*. The entirety of the matter appears to be summed up by the words, “*inherit all things,*” in [Revelation 21:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.7&t=NKJV). The overcomer will be a co-heir with Christ in the kingdom and realize all the promises to the overcomers in chapters two and three (*cf*. [Hebrews 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+1.2&t=NKJV)).

2) To Have No Power over Martyrs

The martyrs of [Revelation 20:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4-6&t=NKJV) are themselves revealed as overcomers. These are the individuals who will gain “*the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name*” during the Tribulation ([Revelation 15:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+15.2&t=NKJV)). A segment of this group was seen when the fifth seal was opened ([Revelation 6:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.9-11&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Revelation 13:7-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.7-15&t=NKJV)); and they were told at this time to “*rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed*.”

But when events depicted in [Revelation 20:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4-6&t=NKJV) come to pass, the Tribulation will be over, the beast and false prophet will have been cast into the lake of fire, the armies of the earth will have been overthrown, Satan will have been bound in the abyss, and the martyred saints of the Tribulation will have been resurrected to be judged ([Revelation 19:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11ff&t=NKJV)). These individuals, *overcoming during the Tribulation*, will, as Christians *overcoming today*, occupy positions with Christ in the kingdom.

(These positions though will be separate from those forming the bride of Christ. The bride will be comprised solely of saved individuals from the present dispensation.

The Tribulation martyrs will come out of a period covering seven unfulfilled years of the previous dispensation, out of time covered by Daniel’s unfulfilled Seventieth Week.)

*The second death* will have “*no power*” over the Tribulation martyrs in view ([Revelation 20:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.6&t=NKJV)). They, as will have been the case with numerous Christians prior to this time, will be revealed *as overcomers* and will not “*be hurt by the second death*” ([Revelation 20:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4&t=NKJV)). As in [Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV); [21:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.7-8&t=NKJV), there is no allusion in this passage to the unsaved dead being cast into the lake of fire ([Revelation 20:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.14&t=NKJV)).

An inheritance in the kingdom is in view; and saved individuals, even though disinherited, with only that referred to as “*the second death*” awaiting them, will *never* be cast into the lake of fire to suffer the same consequences which the unsaved will one day suffer in this place.

To Be Hurt By . . . .

Exactly what does it mean “*to be hurt by*” the second death in [Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV)? In light of [Revelation 20:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4-6&t=NKJV); [21:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.7-8&t=NKJV), which deals with overcoming and being overcome, this can mean only one thing: Non-overcoming Christians are going to “*have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*” ([Revelation 21:8b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.8b&t=NKJV)).

“Fire” in Scripture is associated with *the judgment of the saved as well as the judgment of the unsaved*; and, following judgment, non-overcoming Christians will be “*hurt by the second death,*” which is associated with *the lake of fire.*

Thus, the time when this will occur is following events at the judgment seat. And though the Christians’ works will be tried in fire at the judgment seat, this is not synonymous with Christians having a part in “*the lake that burns with fire and brimstones*.” Rather, at this judgment, Christians will be shown to have either overcome or to have been overcome, with the carrying out of decisions and determinations made at the judgment seat occurring at a time following these events.

(Note in the judgment of the unsaved in [Revelation 20:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.11-15&t=NKJV) that the lake of fire and the second death enter into the matter *only following judgment*. The lake of fire and the second death come into view only following decisions and determinations surrounding their judgment.

And it will be the same for the saved preceding this time. They will first be judged. Only then, *only following the decisions and determinations surrounding their judgment*, do the lake of fire and the second death come into view.)

Each of the overcomer’s promises is *millennial* in its scope of fulfillment. That which is in view by and through overcoming, or not overcoming — as the case may be — will be realized during the 1,000-year Messianic Era alone.

The fact that these are millennial in their scope of fulfillment can be illustrated quite easily. Note the promises to two of the seven churches in [Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV); [3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV). No such scene as presented in these verses will exist beyond the Millennium.

Christ and His co-heirs, beyond the Millennium, will no longer rule over the nations, as this rule is pictured in [Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV). Rather, the Gentiles comprising these nations will be brought into positions of rulership themselves with Christ and His co-heirs, as this rule extends beyond the earth, out into the universe ([Revelation 22:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.2&t=NKJV), [5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.5&t=NKJV)). And the Son, beyond the Millennium, will no longer sit on His own throne, as seen in [Revelation 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV). Rather, He will sit on “*the throne of God and of the Lamb*,” from whence universal rule will emanate ([Revelation 22:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.1&t=NKJV), [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.3&t=NKJV), [5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.5&t=NKJV)).

And the same is true relative to the overcomer’s promise to the church in Smyrna, having to do with the second death. This promise can *only be millennial* within its scope of fulfillment, which clearly reveals that the conditions alluded to for the non-overcomer in this promise will exist for *the duration of the Messianic Era alone*, not throughout the eternal ages beyond.

Scripture deals with *millennial rewards and/or loss*, never with eternal rewards and/or loss. This should be easy enough for anyone to understand, for if rewards are eternal, so is loss of rewards. And loss of rewards involves an association with *death* ([Romans 8:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.13&t=NKJV)), something which Scripture clearly reveals will no longer exist in the eternal ages beyond the Millennium ([1 Corinthians 15:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.26&t=NKJV); [Revelation 21:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.1-4&t=NKJV)).

In the overcomer’s promise to the church in Smyrna, there is a clear implication that those who do not overcome *will be hurt by the second death*. And any attempt to take this promise and make it mean something other than what it clearly states *serves only to destroy the promise*, something that the Lord sounded a solemn warning against ([Revelation 22:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.18-19&t=NKJV)). The promise that those who do overcome *will not “be hurt by the second death”* would be meaningless unless this promise is taken at face value and allowed to mean *exactly what it says*, clearly implying that those who do not overcome *will “be hurt by the second death.”*

The “second death” in the book of Revelation is associated with *the lake of fire* ([Revelation 21:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.8&t=NKJV)). And those who do not overcome ([Revelation 21:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.7&t=NKJV)) are going to have their part in this lake of fire ([Revelation 21:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.8&t=NKJV)). That is, *they will be hurt by the second death by having a part in the lake of fire.*

But exactly what is meant by a saved person being hurt by the second death and having a part in the lake of fire in [Revelation 21:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.8&t=NKJV)?

Revelation chapter twenty-one moves beyond the Millennium into the eternal ages, and the first six verses provide the complete story concerning conditions as these ages begin. Note the words, “*It is done*,” in the first part of verse six ([Revelation 21:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.6&t=NKJV)). This is the translation of a verb in the perfect tense in the Greek text, indicating that the matter has been brought to completion and presently exists in that finished state.

Then, beginning with the latter part of verse six and continuing through verse eight, overcoming and/or being overcome are again, for the last time, dealt with in this book. And this takes a person back to the same place seen in chapters two and three.

Then, the remainder of the book is simply a commentary for the eight verses that open and begin this section. First, a commentary is provided for the first part of this opening section. [Revelation 21:9-22:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.9-22.5&t=NKJV) forms a commentary for this part of the section ([Revelation 21:1-6a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.1-6a&t=NKJV)), which has to do with conditions beyond the Millennium. Note how this commentary in chapter twenty-two closes: “. . . *and they shall reign forever and ever* [throughout the endless ages]” ([Revelation 22:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.5&t=NKJV)).

Then, the remainder of chapter twenty-two ([Revelation 22:6ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.6ff&t=NKJV)) forms a commentary for the second part of this opening section, which has to do with conditions before and during the Millennium ([Revelation 21:6-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.6-8&t=NKJV) [6b]).

And this will explain why, *outside the gates of Jerusalem during the Messianic Era*, one will be able to find “*dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murders and idolaters, and whosoever loves and practices a lie*” ([Revelation 22:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.15&t=NKJV)). This information is given to shed light on and provide additional detail for verses in the preceding chapter ([Revelation 21:6-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.6-8&t=NKJV) [6b]), and the information in these verses in the preceding chapter was given to shed light on the previous overcomer’s promises, particularly the one to the church in Smyrna dealing with “*the second death*” ([Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV)).

To distinguish between millennial and eternal conditions in this respect, note that those *outside the gates* during the eternal ages will be the Gentile nations, as the New Jerusalem rests on the new earth ([Revelation 21:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.24-27&t=NKJV)); but those outside the gates during the preceding Messianic Era, with the New Jerusalem in the heavens above the earth, will be the non-overcomers ([Revelation 22:14-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.14-15&t=NKJV)). And the place that they will occupy is described at least four other ways in Scripture — by the use of *Gehenna, the outer darkness, the furnace of fire, and the lake of fire.*

The picture surrounding an association between *Gehenna and the lake of fire* appears unmistakable. As *Gehenna* was the place of refuse for the earthly city of Jerusalem, *the lake of fire* is seen as the place of refuse for the heavenly city of Jerusalem. And as *Gehenna* was on the opposite side of the city from that side where God dwelled (*south*, as opposed to *north* [*cf*. [Leviticus 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Leviticus+1.11&t=NKJV); [Isaiah 14:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.13&t=NKJV)]), thus will it be with the counterpart to *Gehenna* in the heavenly Jerusalem. The lake of fire is used with respect to a place completely apart from Christ and His rule. And those “*hurt by the second death*” are seen occupying this place during the 1,000-year Messianic Era.

(Why does Scripture associate non-overcoming Christians with the lake of fire in relation to Christ’s millennial reign, in this manner? The answer would be the same as the reason why Scripture associates the unsaved with the lake of fire throughout the endless ages of eternity, following the Millennium.

The lake of fire was *not* prepared for man. Rather, it was prepared “*for the devil and his angels*” [[Matthew 25:41](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.41&t=NKJV)]. It was prepared for those who had rejected God’s supreme power and authority, as Satan sought to acquire power and authority above that which had been delegated [[Isaiah 14:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.13-14&t=NKJV)]. Thus, in this respect, the lake of fire is connected with *regality*.

And man, created to replace Satan and his angels, finds his connection with the lake of fire on exactly the same basis. *Saved man*, ignoring the very reason for his salvation [which is *regal*], will find himself associated with the lake of fire during the Millennium [an association connected with all that the lake of fire implies]. And *unsaved man*, ignoring salvation and the reason for man’s creation [which, again, is *regal*], will find himself associated with the lake of fire throughout the endless ages following the Millennium [an association connected with all that the lake of fire implies].)

But, relative to Christians and the coming kingdom of Christ, is Scripture dealing with something literal? Or, is Scripture dealing with metaphors?

Note how Scripture uses metaphors to deal with this same thing elsewhere.

In [John 15:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+15.6&t=NKJV) and [Hebrews 6:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.8&t=NKJV), saved individuals are spoken of in a metaphorical sense, where a *burning with fire* is referenced. And the context both places has to do with either bearing fruit or not bearing fruit, which is exactly the same thing which is seen in the Matthew thirteen parables. Or, as the matter is expressed in Revelation chapters two and three, either overcoming or being overcome.

And the negative side of the matter is expressed at least two other ways in Scripture — being cast into *Gehenna* (a reference to the place of refuse outside the city walls of Jerusalem at this time; [Matthew 5:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+5.22&t=NKJV), [29-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+5.29-30&t=NKJV); [23:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.15&t=NKJV), [33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.33&t=NKJV)) or being cast into *outer darkness* ([Matthew 8:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+8.12&t=NKJV); [22:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.13&t=NKJV); [25:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.30&t=NKJV)).

Overcoming or not overcoming and being unhurt or being hurt by the second death in [Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV) is expressed a slightly different way in [Romans 8:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.13&t=NKJV):

*For if you* [a reference to ‘brethren’ in [Romans 8:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.12&t=NKJV)] *live according to the flesh you shall die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*.

Whether *Gehenna* or *outer darkness* in Matthew, *a burning with fire* in John and Hebrews, *being cast into a furnace* or *lake of fire* in Matthew and Revelation, or *suffering death or being hurt by the second death* in Romans and Revelation, different facets of exactly the same thing are in view. All of these are used in contexts showing that they have to do with *saved people in relation to fruit bearing and the kingdom*.

By comparing Scripture with Scripture, it is plain that these are simply different ways of expressing *the same thing*. And since a literal casting into outer darkness, Gehenna, or a furnace or lake of fire could not possibly be in view (for these different places could not possibly be looked upon as referring to the same place in a literal sense), it is evident that *metaphors* are being used throughout. But relative to the unsaved and the lake of fire, this is simply not expressed other ways in Scripture as it is with the saved, leaving no room for any thought other than understanding the matter as *literal*, not metaphorical.

Aside from the preceding, it is clear that all Christians, faithful and unfaithful alike, will be in the kingdom. This is seen in type in Genesis chapters eighteen and nineteen. Both Abraham and Lot, in the final analysis, are seen on the mount (a “mountain” in Scripture signifies a kingdom). But note the stark difference in the place that each occupied. Abraham stood before the Lord, where he had always stood ([Genesis 18:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+18.22&t=NKJV); [19:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.27&t=NKJV)). Lot though found himself in a place separated from the Lord, in a place where he also had always stood ([Genesis 19:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.1&t=NKJV), [30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+19.30&t=NKJV)).

Saving a Soul from Death

*Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,*

*let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.* ([James 5:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+5.19-20&t=NKJV))

According to [1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV), Christians whose works are burned at the judgment seat will “*suffer loss*.” This cannot refer to the loss of rewards, for rewards enter into this judgment only after a person is *approved*. The disapproved will have no rewards to lose. The only thing in their possession possible for them to lose will be their souls (lives). [Matthew 16:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.25-27&t=NKJV) refers to the saved coming under judgment and the possibility of a person losing his soul. The word “*lose*” in these verses and the word “loss” in [1 Corinthians 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.15&t=NKJV) are translations of the same word in the Greek text. The loss experienced by the person in [Matthew 16:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.25-27&t=NKJV) is that of his *soul*; and it must be the same in [1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV), for the judgments referred to are the same.

The epistle of James, referring to the salvation of the soul at the outset ([James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV)), concludes by referring to the possibility of a Christian experiencing “death” in relation to his *soul* ([James 5:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+5.19-20&t=NKJV)). This thought is set forth in an opposite sense to that of realizing the “salvation” of his *soul* ([James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV)). Failing in the present race of the faith ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-27&t=NKJV); *cf*. [2 Timothy 4:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.7-8&t=NKJV)), a Christian will be *disapproved* at the judgment seat. He will have failed to overcome, be victorious; and, failing in this manner, he will *lose his soul*.

Thus, experiencing “*death*” in [James 5:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+5.20&t=NKJV) can, contextually, only be synonymous with *the loss of the soul* (life); that is to say, a person entering into this experience will be “*hurt by the second death*.” “*Losing one’s soul* [life]” and “*being hurt by the second death*” are two ways of saying the same thing.

In order for a “*second death*” to exist, there must previously have been a “first death.” Such a death, of course, is introduced in the fall of Adam:

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.* ([Romans 5:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.12&t=NKJV))

Every man comes into this world via the birth from below and becomes a partaker of the first death by and through his association with Adam. And the second death will befall unredeemed man, with eternal verities in view, because of his continued association with Adam.

But for redeemed man, the second death is a different matter altogether. Through a bringing forth from above, he is no longer associated with Adam and death in the same sense as unredeemed man; and the possibility of his being hurt by the second death concerns events that occur in an entirely different sphere of activity.

Adam fell from the position in which he had been created; and more is involved in Adam’s fall than eternal verities, affecting only the unredeemed. Adam had been called into existence to assume rulership over the earth; and the entrance of sin (along with bringing about eternal separation from God, apart from redemption) resulted in his disqualification to rule in Satan’s stead. Adam, through the fall, found himself disqualified to occupy the very position for which he had been created. Redemption itself did not place Adam back in this position ([Genesis 3:21-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.21-24&t=NKJV)); nor does redemption today place man back in this position.

Redeemed man today, as Adam following his fall and redemption, remains barred from the tree of life, *awaiting the salvation of his soul*. Following the fall in [Genesis 3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3&t=NKJV), the tree of life does not enter the affairs of man again *until the salvation of the soul* is brought to pass; and this will occur only following the issues and determinations surrounding the judgment seat, following Man’s Day.

Man ultimately occupying the position that Adam was created to assume requires his identification with *a new Federal Head — the last Adam.* The last Adam appeared and met Satan in a face-to-face confrontation to show that He was fully qualified to function in the realm (a regal realm) that the first Adam forfeited in the fall. He then provided redemption for man by and through the sacrifice of Himself and presently awaits the day when He will take the kingdom.

Those “*in Christ*” have been redeemed, with a view to their being co-heirs with Christ after He wrests control of the kingdom from Satan and his angels. Those ruling with the last Adam will constitute His bride and reign as consort queen with Him, as Eve would have reigned as consort queen with the first Adam had both remained obedient and occupied the position for which man had been created.

The second death, as it will affect Christians, can be properly understood only in the light of a parallel between that which Adam failed to realize in the past and that which unfaithful Christians will fail to realize in the future — the very purpose for their existence. And as *the first death* entered into man’s former failure, *the second death* will enter into man’s latter failure — for the saved on the one hand, and for the unsaved on the other.

Experiencing “*the second death*” for the redeemed, by failure to realize one’s calling, can in no way pertain to eternal verities. Such *cannot* be in view at all. Christians are present possessors of an eternal salvation based entirely upon the finished work of Christ at Calvary; and there can be *no such thing as “the second death”* affecting any Christian on the basis of this salvation, else the finished work of Christ itself would be called into question and come into disrepute.

The Christian’s association with “*the second death*” can only pertain *to millennial verities and the loss of one’s sou*l, the exact association provided by each reference in the book of Revelation. Unfaithful Christians will experience “*the second death*” during the millennial reign of Christ. That is to say, they will lose their souls (lives) and be denied positions with Christ in the kingdom. Again, “*the second death*” for them is *millennial only*, not eternal.

Non-overcoming Christians, through experiencing “the second death,” will be:

*. . . punished with everlasting* [Greek: aionios, age-lasting] *destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power;*

*when He comes in that Day to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe* . . . . ([2 Thessalonians 1:9-10a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Thessalonians+1.9-10a&t=NKJV) [9b])

For the unredeemed though, “*the second death*” can only pertain *to eternal verities*. As a result of Adam’s sin and their non-acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary, the unredeemed reside in a condition described in Scripture as “*dead in trespasses and sins*” ([Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV); [Colossians 2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+2.13&t=NKJV)). They, in this condition, can have nothing to do with matters pertaining to rulership over the earth. Eternal verities alone are in view; and the second death, as it will affect the unredeemed, must be understood in this sense.

Unredeemed man will experience “the second death” following the millennium, with only *the endless ages* *in view*. The unredeemed will *remain* in their spiritually dead condition and, in the lake of fire, be *eternally separated* from God:

*Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

*And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire*. ([Revelation 20:14-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.14-15&t=NKJV))

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Chapter 7

**The Hidden Manna, White Stone**

*He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written that no one knows except him who receives it.* ([Revelation 2:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.17&t=NKJV))

The third of the seven overcomer promises is given in the message to the church in Pergamos, a church located in a wealthy city where pagan worship flourished. Pergamos was a religious center filled with pagan cults, housing temples and shrines dedicated to the false gods of the Gentiles.

Pergamos, at this time, was also a center for the Roman government in Asia; and Satan, who ruled the earth through the Gentile nations (and continues to rule in this same manner today), was said to have his throne in Pergamos ([Revelation 2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.13&t=NKJV)). This though could only refer to a prominent place for his rule in the Roman Empire rather than to the actual location of his throne, for his throne would still be located *in the heavens* at this time, not on the earth.

The Gentile nations ruling under Satan would exhibit power connected with Satan’s throne (*cf*. [Ezekiel 28:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.14&t=NKJV); [Daniel 10:12-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.12-20&t=NKJV); [Luke 4:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+4.5-6&t=NKJV)). And it would have to be in this respect that Satan’s throne was said to be in Pergamos — a center of Gentile government, idolatry, and false worship.

Satan’s throne will not actually be upon the earth until he, along with his angels, is cast out of the heavens near the middle of the Tribulation period ([Revelation 12:7-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.7-12&t=NKJV)). It will then be established in Babylon, Satan’s earthly capital ([Isaiah 14:4ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.4ff&t=NKJV); [Daniel 2:31-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.31-45&t=NKJV)); and his throne will then be occupied by Antichrist, the last king of Babylon preceding its destruction ([Revelation 13:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.1-2&t=NKJV); [17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17-18&t=NKJV)).

Aside from the nation of Israel, the Roman Empire was the great persecutor of early Christianity. Christians, as the Jews, were monotheistic; and they fixed their eyes upon the one true God, not upon Caesar. And if this period of persecution is to be associated in a historical sense with that which is stated about any one of the seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three, it would seemingly have to be the church in Smyrna ([Revelation 2:8-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.8-11&t=NKJV)).

Numerous Christians during this period of Roman persecution were imprisoned, tortured, and killed. But the more widespread this persecution became, the more Christendom flourished and grew. This is what led Tertullian, one of the early Church fathers who lived during that time, to say, “*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church*.”

Along with a Satanic persecution from without during this period, there was also a Satanic corrupting work from within. Very early in the dispensation, as seen in the fourth of seven parables in Matthew chapter thirteen ([Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV)), leaven was placed in three measures of meal, which would have to do centrally with the Word of the Kingdom and Christendom (the subject matter seen throughout these parables). And this resulted in a corrupting work *from within*, which paralleled the persecution *from without* (*ref*. the author’s book, in this site, [Mysteries of the Kingdom BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-five.php#Mysteries%20of%20the%20Kingdom%20BOOK), chapter 6, “[Parable of the Leaven](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-five.php#Parable%20of%20the%20Leaven)”).

In relation to leaven placed in the three measures of meal in [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV), “*leaven*” in Scripture is spoken of as *a corrupting substance*, and the number “*three*” in Scripture is the number of *divine perfection*. This number shows *divine perfection within that which is in view — divine perfection within that which is being corrupted with the leaven*.

The “*three measures of meal*” — three measures of ground grain, used to make *bread* — are in view. The reference is to the *Word of God* ([Matthew 4:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.4&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Isaiah 55:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+55.1-2&t=NKJV)), though not the Word in a general sense. Rather, the reference, contextually, is to *the Word in a specific sense, a specific part of the Word, a specific teaching in the Word*. And *a corrupting agent is seen being placed within that which is perfect.*

The subject at hand leading into this fourth parable in Matthew chapter thirteen has to do with the *Word of the Kingdom*. It has to do with how the message surrounding the coming kingdom of Christ would begin to be proclaimed in Christendom and how this message would progressively change because of something (*a corrupting agent*) placed within the message ([Matthew 13:19-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.19-24&t=NKJV), [31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.31&t=NKJV), [33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV)).

Thus, during the first several centuries of the dispensation, there was not only a satanic work *from without* but one *from within* as well.

Then, at the beginning of the fourth century, Satan brought matters *together* in his efforts to destroy Christianity. His efforts *from within* (the working of the leaven through several centuries of time) had produced such corruption within Christendom that he could merge these efforts with those *from without* (persecution by the Roman Empire). To bring this to pass, Satan brought Roman persecution to an end and simply merged *a corrupt religious system with a pagan political system.*

The Roman emperor Diocletian, coming into power near the end of the third century, was the last of the persecuting emperors. His persecuting edicts were repealed during the opening years of the fourth century by Constantine the Great after he had come into power, and Christianity was then regarded as simply *another religion in the countries over which Rome ruled.*

This move by Constantine set the stage for a succeeding move having far-reaching ramifications: The day came when Constantine (for reasons upon which historians differ) embraced Christianity, an act subsequently followed by his efforts to force Christianity on the Empire as its one and only religion. These efforts by Constantine began a sequence of events that, toward the end of the fourth century, ultimately resulted in *a complete merger of Church and State.*

In the year 380 A.D., Theodosius I issued an edict that made Christianity *the exclusive state religion*, and in the year 395 A.D., Christianity was finally recognized as *the official and only religion* of the Roman Empire. Christianity then found itself completely enmeshed within a world power in the sphere of governmental authority over which Satan exercised control, *completely out of line* with God’s plans and purposes for *the new creation “in Christ.”*

If the message to the church in Pergamos has to do with a particular period in Church history, it would have to be this period, where a merger of Church and State occurred. This is the period that followed the Roman persecutions; and the names “*Smyrna*” and “*Pergamos*,” in this respect, would themselves be significant in pointing to these periods.

“*Smyrna*” is a transliterated Greek word meaning *myrrh* (a resinous gum used for embalming), which could possibly point to the martyrs under Roman persecution during the first several centuries of the Church’s existence. “*Pergamos*,” on the other hand, comes from the Greek word *gamos*, meaning “marriage”; and this word could possibly point to that period in Church history, beginning with Constantine, when the Church was wed to the world.

This entire matter is depicted in the parable of the mustard seed in [Matthew 13:31-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.31-32&t=NKJV). The mustard seed, the smallest of seeds, would, through *natural growth*, germinate and become “*the greater than the herbs*.” However, the mustard seed in the parable germinated and, after a period of time, experienced *an abnormal growth*, becoming a “*tree*.” The very next and last thing stated in this parable is the fact that once the herb had become a tree, “*the birds of the air*” then came and lodged in its branches.

A “*tree*” in Scripture symbolizes *a national power* ([Judges 9:8-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Judges+9.8-15&t=NKJV); [Daniel 4:10-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.10-12&t=NKJV), [20-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.20-22&t=NKJV)), and the “*birds*” in [Matthew 13:32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.32&t=NKJV) are associated with *Satanic activity* (*cf*. [Matthew 13:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.4&t=NKJV), [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.19&t=NKJV)). The mustard seed germinating and experiencing natural growth portrays the Church during the early years of the present dispensation; and the herb subsequently experiencing abnormal growth, producing a tree, allowing the birds of the air to lodge in its branches, portrays that which Christianity became during and following the reign of Constantine. The Church merged with the state, becoming a *tree*, *a world power*; and Satan with his agents simply moved in and began accomplishing that which, under Roman persecution, had not been accomplished.

Where *the pagan*, persecuting emperors seemingly failed, the first so-called *Christian* emperors succeeded. And out of this condition in which the Church found itself arose two major problems:

1) There were those in the church in Pergamos who held to the “*doctrine of Balaam*.”

2) There were those in this church who held to the “*doctrine of the Nicolaitans*” (note also the “*deeds of the Nicolaitans*” in the message to the church in Ephesus [[Revelation 2:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.6&t=NKJV)]).

These two doctrinal problems crept into the Church early in its history, but they are not at all peculiar to the historical state of the Church as seen in Revelation chapter two. The intermingling of Christians in the affairs of the world (governmental and other affairs) is something from which the Church has never really withdrawn, and the same problems produced by conditions of this nature in the fourth century are still with us today (*cf*. [2 Timothy 2:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.3-4&t=NKJV)).

Rather than Christianity converting the world, the world converted Christianity; and the lasting effects of this unholy relationship — very evident in the closing days of the Laodicean period in which we live — is what led Andrew Bonar, a nineteenth-century Scottish minister, to say,

*“I looked for the Church and found it in the world. I looked for the world and found it in the Church.”*

Doctrine of Balaam

[Jude 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.11&t=NKJV) records “*the error of Balaam*,” [2 Peter 2:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+2.15&t=NKJV) records “*the way of Balaam*,” and [Revelation 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.14&t=NKJV) records “*the doctrine of Balaam*.” All three of these are used in passages referring to Christians entering into a state of affairs within Christendom that not only defiles their high calling but which also dishonors the Lord who purchased their salvation with His own blood.

*The error* and *way* of Balaam appear in companion portions of Scripture and would seem to refer basically to the same thing. *The error* of Balaam is associated with “*profit*” (KJV: “*reward*”) in Jude, and *the way* of Balaam is associated with the “*wages of unrighteousness*” in 2 Peter. Thus, *the error* and *way* of Balaam have to do with “monetary gain”; and, according to the Old Testament account, monetary gain derived by and through this means is acquired through one’s willingness to compromise the principles of God and proclaim things contrary to the revealed Word of God (though Balaam was prevented from doing this and could only utter that which was in accord with the revealed Word of God).

*The error* and *way* of Balaam can be found in Numbers chapters twenty-two through twenty-four ([Numbers 22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+22&t=NKJV); [23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+23&t=NKJV); [24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+24&t=NKJV)).

Balak, king of the Moabites, hired Balaam to come into his land and pronounce a curse upon the children of Israel. Balak had seen that which Israel had done to the Amorites; and knowing that this nation would soon be passing through his country, he was afraid because of the exhibited power that Israel exercised through the nation’s God.

Balak knew that the only way Israel could be defeated was by severing this power. Thus, Balak hired Balaam to come into Moab and pronounce a curse upon the Israelites, incurring God’s wrath upon them in order to ultimately bring about their defeat at the hands of the enemy.

However, once in Moab, in four separate prophecies, being unable to curse the one whom God had not cursed ([Numbers 23:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+23.8&t=NKJV)), only blessings proceeded from the lips of Balaam. Balak, angered by the turn of events, sent Balaam out of Moab to his own country.

*The doctrine* of Balaam though was different than his *error* and *way*. His *doctrine* had to do with that part of his teaching that was contrary to the revealed Word of God, and it is seen in Scripture following the account of his error and way.

1) Past Teaching

Scripture surrounding the doctrine of Balaam and its tragic results is given in [Numbers 25:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+25.1-3&t=NKJV):

*Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab.*

*They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.*

*So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.* ([Numbers 25:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+25.1-3&t=NKJV))

The Israelites, after coming into Moab, began to commit fornication with the “*women of Moab*,” eat meat sacrificed to idols, and bow down and worship the false gods of the Moabites. In order to put a stop to these sins and stay the hand of God’s judgment upon the entire camp of Israel, Moses was instructed to slay every Israelite who had “*joined himself to Baal-peor*.” Because of their sins, twenty-four thousand Israelites perished under God’s judgment.

What caused the Israelites to depart from the one true and living God, who had delivered them from Egypt, to begin serving false gods and following the idolatrous ways of the Moabites? The answer is given in [Numbers 31:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+31.16&t=NKJV):

*Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.*

As previously seen, Balaam could not curse the one whom God had not cursed. Only beautiful prophecies filled with blessings flowed from his lips when he was called into Moab by Balak. But Balaam did succeed in leading the Israelites astray through *his counsel*. The Israelites, through *the counsel of Balaam*, were led to commit fornication, eat things sacrificed to idols, and bow down before other gods. And because of these sins, the judgment of God fell upon His people.

*The counsel of Balaam — i.e., “the doctrine of Balaam”* — in the light of his prophecies ([Numbers 23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+23&t=NKJV); [24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+24&t=NKJV)), could only have had to do with sins committed by the Israelites in view of promises and blessings associated with their covenant relationship with God.

In this respect, briefly stated, this doctrine could only have had to do with the fact that the Israelites were the covenant people of God, God’s covenants (Abrahamic and Mosaic at the time) could not be broken, and consequently the Israelites, in relation to realizing covenant promises and blessings, could sin with immunity.

Such, of course, was not the case at all. It was true that the covenants established between God and Israel could not be broken; it was also true that Israel’s position as firstborn could not be changed; but it was not true that the Israelites, in relation to realizing covenant promises and blessings, could sin with immunity.

God’s wrath was manifested because of the sins of His people, and the thousands of Israelites who succumbed to the counsel of Balaam were overthrown in the wilderness, short of the goal of their calling.

2) Present Teaching

The doctrine of Balaam is one of the most widely taught doctrines in the Church today. Christians know — as their counterparts in the church in Pergamos — that they have been saved by grace through faith, and nothing can alter that which has been effected by their having “*passed from death to life*” ([John 5:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+5.24&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1ff&t=NKJV)). They now possess spiritual life, which can *never* be taken from them; and, because of the unchangeable nature of the life they presently possess, they reason they can conduct their lives in any manner that they choose, and it will make no difference.

However, as in the case of the Israelites, so in the case of Christians. Christians, as the Israelites under Moses, have been saved for a specific, revealed purpose. Every Christian is enrolled in a race ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-27&t=NKJV)); every Christian is engaged in a conflict ([Ephesians 6:10-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.10-18&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 2:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.4-5&t=NKJV)). And the goal set before every Christian is to win the race, be victorious in the conflict.

God has made provision for Christians in order that at the end of the race they might say with Paul in [2 Timothy 4:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.7-8&t=NKJV):

*I have fought the good fight* [‘I have strained every muscle in the good contest’].  *I have finished the race, I have kept the faith:*

*Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness . . . .*

The enemy, Satan, on the other hand, is doing all within his power to bring about defeat in the lives of Christians. Satan’s main objective in the present warfare is to prevent Christians from qualifying for crowns and thus positions of rulership with Christ in His coming kingdom.

God is presently bringing into existence a new order of sons to replace the order now ruling in the heavens; and the incumbent rulers — Satan and his angels — know this and are doing all within their power to retain their present governmental control over the earth.

The main facet of the doctrine of Balaam that is being promulgated in churches today is the teaching that future blessings and rewards have been set aside for every Christian solely on the basis of Christ’s finished work on Calvary and the Christian’s positional standing “*in Christ*.” In this respect, all Christians — regardless of their conduct during the present time — will receive crowns and positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom.

However, that which is clearly taught throughout the Word of God is to the contrary. Though the Israelites’ positional standing before God could not be changed, *they could not and did not sin with immunity*. And exactly the same thing is true concerning Christians. Though the Christians’ positional standing before God cannot be changed, *they as well, as the Israelites, cannot sin with immunity*. Sin in the camp of Israel resulted in the Israelites being overthrown in the wilderness, short of the goal of their calling. And it will be no different for Christians.

*And I took the crown that was on his head* . . . . ([2 Samuel 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Samuel+1.10&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Revelation 3:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.11&t=NKJV)).

Doctrine of the Nicolaitans

Outside of Revelation, chapter two, there is no known sect in Church history (biblical or secular) referred to by the name “*Nicolaitans*.” Some early writers tried unsuccessfully to connect this group of individuals with *Nicolas of Antioch*; and others, following in their steps, try this even today. However, such a connection cannot be established, which leaves one with a *sole* method of identification — *the meaning of the word itself.*

The reference can only be to a sect in the church in Pergamos (known also to those in Ephesus) whose practices and doctrine are s*elf-explained by the term* that the Spirit of God used to identify them. Apart from this means of identification, *nothing* can be known about the Nicolaitans.

The word “*Nicolaitans*” is a transliterated, compound word from the Greek text (*nikolaites*), derived from *nike* (“a victor,” “a conqueror”) and *laos* (“people”). Thus, the word simply means, “to be victorious over the people,” “to conquer the people.”

Using the meaning of the name itself after this fashion, the Nicolaitans would have to be identified as individuals (leaders) in the Church who had subjugated the remaining Christians to their self-imposed authority — individuals comprising a ruling, priestly class (the clergy over the laity), *something condemned by Scripture in no uncertain terms*.

*Authority* within the Church (or a local church) must *always* be based *solely* upon “service.” Those occupying positions of leadership (elders, deacons) must *always minister* (serve) *within this sphere of activity*, which is to bear no relationship whatsoever to authority exercised by those in the world (*cf*. [Matthew 20:25-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+20.25-28&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 16:15-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+16.15-16&t=NKJV)).

“Nicolaitanism” is simply *a corruption of delegated authority within the Church* (or a local church), *exercising this authority after a forbidden pattern — after the pattern set forth by those in the world.*

Nicolaitanism, being introduced in the message to the church in Ephesus, was apparently in existence very early in Church history; but it would only appear natural that this doctrine coming into full bloom waited for that period covered by the church in *Pergamos*.

Nicolaitanism patterns itself *after the structure set forth in worldly governmental systems*; and it was through the actions of Constantine and others in the fourth century Roman Empire, during the period in Church history that seemingly parallels that which is seen in the message to the church in Pergamos, that the way was opened for an already-existing world system in the Church to follow this pattern to a level heretofore unattained. Once the union between Church and state had been established, worldly practices in the Church could only become commonplace.

Since the Church has never really separated itself from the position in which it began to assume during the days of Constantine, one can only expect to find Christendom saturated with the “*doctrine of the Nicolaitans*” from the fourth century right on into the present day and time. In fact, viewing the matter from this perspective, while looking upon it within the framework of the leavening process in [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV), the doctrine of the Nicolaitans would have to be considered a false teaching that would undoubtedly *increase with time*; and this would make it *even more prominent in the Church today*, near the end of the dispensation, than at any other time in history.

The leaven that the woman placed in the three measures of meal *can only* progressively continue its deteriorating work throughout the dispensation. And this leaven *can only* do its most damaging work near the end of the dispensation, during the time in which we presently live.

The “*doctrine of Balaam*,” viewed within the framework of the same perspective and same leavening process, would have to be looked upon after an identical fashion in relation to *time*. This is a doctrine that will undoubtedly, as the “*doctrine of the Nicolaitans*,” be more widely proclaimed in the latter days than at any other time in the history of the Church. And the “*doctrine of Balaam*” will, in many instances, be proclaimed by those holding to the “*doctrine of the Nicolaitans*.”

Such can only be *the ever-increasing, degenerate state of teaching* emanating from the lukewarm Laodicean Church during the closing years of the present dispensation, immediately preceding Christ’s return for the Church.

The Overcomers

Contextually, the overcomer’s promise in [Revelation 2:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.17&t=NKJV) will be realized by those Christians who conduct their affairs in a manner separate from the widespread teachings of the “*doctrine of Balaam*” and the “*doctrine of the Nicolaitans*.” It *does* make a difference how one lives after he has been saved; and the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than man, *must* be recognized as one seeks to live a life pleasing to the Lord.

The beliefs and practices of those holding to the “*doctrine of Balaam*” and the “*doctrine of the Nicolaitans*” have completely permeated the churches, such beliefs and practices are part and parcel with those of the world, and to the victor *alone* belongs the promise that God has given. The overcomer *alone* has been promised that he will be allowed to partake of the “*hidden manna*” and will be given a “*white stone*” with a “*new name*” in the stone, which no man will know other than the one receiving it.

1) The Hidden Manna

“Manna” is found in both the Old and New Testaments, but the “*hidden manna*” is found only in the third overcomer’s promise in the book of Revelation. The Israelites were provided manna during their pilgrim journey between Egypt and Canaan; and Christians, in like manner, have been provided Manna during their pilgrim journey between the antitype of Egypt (the world) and the antitype of Canaan (a heavenly land, wherein Christians will realize an inheritance). And any teaching concerning the future “*hidden manna*” must be drawn from past and present appearances of the manna as a provision for God’s people.

(The fact that the future provision for God’s people is presently “*hidden*” may be an allusion to the manna that was kept “*before the Lord*” in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle. This manna was placed in a “*golden pot*” within the Ark of the Covenant, *hidden* from the people but *visible* to God [[Exodus 16:14-35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+16.14-35&t=NKJV); [John 6:48-54](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+6.48-54&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 9:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.2-4&t=NKJV)]. So it is with the hidden manna during the present time. It is *hidden* from the people but *visible* to God.)

The manna given to the Israelites during the wilderness journey was a provision for their physical needs. This manna was a special food, prepared by God, containing everything necessary for the sustenance and well-being of the physical body. It was provided fresh day-by-day, and the Israelites were to gather and eat the manna after the fashion in which it was given. No supplementary food was provided or required.

The “manna” that the Israelites were given in the wilderness typified Christ, “*the living bread that came down from heaven*”; and this “*living bread*” is the provision that Christians have been given for their wilderness journey. Christians “*eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood*” ([John 6:48-54](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+6.48-54&t=NKJV)) by and through the assimilation of the Word of God. This Word is a special food, prepared by God, containing everything necessary for the sustenance and well-being of the spiritual life.

The Spirit of God will render this food fresh day-by-day; and Christians are to partake of the Living Word through the Written Word, after the manner in which it has been given. No supplementary food has been provided; nor is any required.

The “*manna*” upon which Christians presently feed has been given to properly prepare and equip them for *the wilderness journey*, and the “*hidden manna*” can only be a parallel provision for *things beyond the wilderness journey.*

The overcomers will be allowed to partake of the hidden manna to properly prepare and equip them as they rule and reign in the kingdom. The provision is “*manna*” *now* and “*hidden manna*” *yet future*, both given to equip Christians during particular periods for particular types of service.

The “*hidden manna*” in the third overcomer’s promise and the “*tree of life*” in the first overcomer’s promise would have to be integrally related in this realm. Both are set forth as provisions to properly equip Christians as they rule and reign, both point to Christ (the true Manna, the true Tree of Life), and both together will form God’s complete provision for the rulers in the kingdom.

However, a distinction must be drawn between the two, viewing each in the sense of a different facet of this provision. Since partaking of the tree of life will provide that special wisdom and knowledge necessary to judge in equity, justice, and righteousness (*ref*. chapter 5 of this book), it can be safely assumed that partaking of the hidden manna will apparently constitute God’s provision to properly prepare overcoming Christians in all other realms of life. Such could possibly include physical needs as well as spiritual needs.

Not that much has been revealed about the resurrection body. Christ partook of food in His resurrection body ([Luke 24:41-43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.41-43&t=NKJV); [John 21:5-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+21.5-14&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Matthew 26:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+26.29&t=NKJV)), but the reason for His partaking of food or details surrounding the matter are not given. If the resurrection body requires sustenance for the rigors of the office Christians are to hold, the hidden manna will apparently provide that sustenance, along with any other requirements for sustenance that Christians may possess.

2) The White Stone, New Name

During the days in which the book of Revelation was written, and days prior to that time, giving one a white stone meant that the person had been charged with some offense but had been acquitted; he had been shown as justified. Since works alone will be reviewed at the judgment seat, justification shown by the white stone must emanate out of a judgment of works.

Justification on the basis of Christ’s finished work at Calvary cannot be in view at all, for overcomers and non-overcomers alike would receive such a stone if that were the case. A white stone will be given to every Christian whose works endure the fire, revealing justification on the basis of that coming under judgment — *a justification on the basis of works, works emanating out of faithfulness* (*cf*. [James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV); *ref*. Chapter 3 in this book).

A white stone was also given to the victor in a contest or battle, which is exactly what is in view through overcoming. Christians are presently in a battle, a warfare, one “*not against flesh and blood*,” but against:

*. . . principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world* [age], *against spiritual wickedness in high places* [against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenlies]. ([Ephesians 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.12&t=NKJV))

And Satan and his angels use the world and the flesh in their never-ceasing efforts to bring about a Christian’s defeat. It is *the victor* — the one overcoming *the world, the flesh, and the devil* — that the promised white stone will be given.

With the preceding in mind, understanding the white stone, along with the new name written on the stone, can possibly best be seen in Joseph’s exaltation by the Pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph, because of his faithfulness to God, was, through divine providence, brought into a position of such favor with Pharaoh that he found himself exalted to the throne. Pharaoh took his own ring and “*put it on Joseph’s hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck*.” He then positioned him as “*ruler over all the land of Egypt,*” and bestowed upon him a new name — “*Zaphnath-paaneah*” ([Genesis 41:39-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+41.39-45&t=NKJV)).

The white stone will identify the overcomer as the one shown justified, victorious in conquest, and elevated to noble rank. As Joseph in the type, he will be placed in the position of a ruler and be given a new name. Joseph was placed over *all Egypt*, and the overcoming Christian will be placed over *all the earth* (“Egypt” is always a type of *the world* in Scripture). He will then be given “*a new name . . . that no one knows except him who receives it*.”

Such is the present prospect set before Christians, as given in the overcomers’ promise to the church in Pergamos.

Concluding Thoughts:

When overcoming Christians go forth to rule with Christ in the kingdom, everything will be in a state of readiness. By and through the provision of *the tree of life, the hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name*, Christians will be properly equipped *for every facet of life in the kingdom* as they rule the nations with Christ.

They will be given *wisdom* and *knowledge* to rule in equity, justice, and righteousness; they will be provided with the necessary *sustenance* (physical and/or spiritual) to equip them for the office that they are to hold; they will be given *identifying stones*, showing their victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; and the One with whom they are to rule as co-heirs will know them by *a new name*.

Through God’s provision, *a perfect rule* will issue forth when man is once again brought back into the position for which he was originally created. All authority in that day will emanate from *one throne* (*cf*. [Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV); [3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV)), and nothing short of *an absolute rule will suffice.*

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Chapter 8

**Power over the Nations**

*And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations —*

*He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels — as I also have received from My Father;*

*and I will give him the morning star.* ([Revelation 2:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-28&t=NKJV))

Remaining within the thought that each of the seven epistles in Revelation chapters two and three possibly points, in a particular sense, to a different period in Church history, the message to the church in Thyatira would seemingly have to point to that period following the days of Constantine. In this respect, it would show a continued description of deteriorating conditions in Christendom following the time when the Church became wed to the world during the days of Constantine, depicted in the preceding message to the church in Pergamos.

(The manner in which the Church both began and will end during the 2,000-year dispensation can clearly be seen in Revelation chapters two and three in the messages to the churches in Ephesus [the first church dealt with] and Laodicea [the last church dealt with]. But to contend for that which is revealed about any one of the seven churches to fit *completely into a particular period of Church history rather than covering, at least to some degree, an overall scope of Church history* would not be a correct way to view matters.

Even remnants of that which is seen in both the church in Ephesus and the church in Laodicea can be seen in Christendom throughout the dispensation. The thought inherent in that which is said about these two churches, in the light of related Scripture, has to do with Christendom becoming less like that seen in Ephesus and more like that seen in Laodicea as the dispensation progresses. Then, near the end of the dispensation, after “the whole” has been leavened [[Mathew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mathew+13.33&t=NKJV)], only that which is seen in the Laodicean church, for all practical purposes, will remain — a completely leavened Christendom that, relative to any proclamation of the Word of the Kingdom, can only be described as “*wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*” [[Revelation 3:17b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.17b&t=NKJV)].

And a sad part of the matter is that the Church in that day — which appears very much to be the present-day Church — will not even recognize that they occupy this completely leavened position.

In the same preceding respect, messages to the remaining five churches seemingly fit into different periods of Church history [though each, after at least some fashion, would have to cover the whole scope of Church history]. Attention will be called to these different periods into which these different churches seemingly fit [more so at particular times than at other times during the dispensation], but doing this is as far as the matter will be taken.)

Once the door had been opened and the world welcomed within, as seen in the Church in the Roman world during the fourth century, the working of the leaven producing corruption in the true biblical message could only have dramatically increased. And any remaining remnants of pristine Christian doctrine and worship could only have begun to gradually be corrupted by the incorporated ways and practices of the world, a corruption that would eventually encompass such proportions that *all Christendom would ultimately be affected.*

That which continued to occur following the time when the Church became wed to the world, seemingly described in the message to the church in Thyatira in Revelation chapter two, is simply another facet of the working of the leaven which the woman placed in the three measures of meal in [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV) — “. . . *until the whole was leavened*.”

The message to the church in Thyatira, in this respect, would actually present the far-reaching results of that which was introduced during the days of Constantine. The world had been invited within, providing added fuel for the leaven which was already working; and this message would present *the depths* to which the world ultimately carried Christianity.

Regardless of how one views matters in relation to Church history, one fact cannot be denied. The false teaching being accepted and practiced by Christians in Thyatira was of such *a degenerate nature* that the Spirit of God reached back hundreds of years in time and associated the entire matter with one of the darkest periods in Israeli history — *the days of Jezebel*. And to properly understand conditions among Christians as they existed in Thyatira, one must understand conditions in the camp of Israel during that time.

(The false doctrine being taught, accepted, and practiced in Thyatira emanated from “*that woman Jezebel*.”

*Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.* [[Revelation 2:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.20&t=NKJV)]

Calling the woman teaching false doctrine in Thyatira by the name “Jezebel” can only be an allusion, through association, to Jezebel in the Old Testament, rather than to the actual name of the person [even though, conceivably, this could also have been the actual name of the person teaching in this church].

The false doctrine being promulgated by this person [with its attendant results] apparently so closely approximated the beliefs and practices of Jezebel in the Old Testament [with their attendant results] that the person teaching these things in the church in Thyatira was referred to by the name of her counterpart from the Old Testament.)

Jezebel

Jezebel appeared in Israeli history during Old Testament days at a time when wickedness was reaching a pinnacle through the unlawful deeds of a succession of Israeli kings. The kingdom had been divided following Solomon’s death, and the kings reigning over the northern ten tribes (the kingdom of Israel, beginning with the reign of Jeroboam) not only themselves “*did evil in the sight of the Lord*” but they also caused the people of Israel “*to sin*” (*cf*. [1 Kings 15:25-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+15.25-26&t=NKJV), [33-34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+15.33-34&t=NKJV); [16:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+16.18-19&t=NKJV)).

This wickedness began to reach a pinnacle during the days of Omri (the sixth king following Jeroboam), and it reached a pinnacle during the reign of his son, Ahab. It is recorded of Omri that he “*did worse than all that were before him*”; and it is recorded of Ahab that he, in turn, “*did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him*.”

It was during the dark days of Ahab’s reign in Israel that Jezebel appeared, with Baal worship subsequently being introduced. Jezebel was the daughter of an idolatrous priest-king whom Ahab had married, a follower of the ways of her father and the one responsible for Baal worship being brought over into the camp of Israel. It was after Ahab’s marriage to Jezebel that he “*went and served Baal, and worshipped him*”; and it was during this time that he “*reared up an altar for Baal*” and “*made a grove*” (also connected with idolatry), doing “*more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him*” ([1 Kings 16:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+16.25&t=NKJV), [30-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+16.30-33&t=NKJV)).

Also, during the reign of Ahab, Jericho was rebuilt; and for centuries a curse had rested upon the person who rose up and rebuilt this city ([1 Kings 16:34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+16.34&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Joshua 6:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joshua+6.26&t=NKJV)).

Jezebel was responsible for the death of numerous prophets of the Lord, and she sought Elijah’s life after he had destroyed the prophets of Baal, following the declaration of the one true and living God by fire on Mt. Carmel ([1 Kings 18:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+18.4&t=NKJV), [17-40](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+18.17-40&t=NKJV); [19:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+19.1-2&t=NKJV)). But the act that appeared to be the final straw, bringing iniquity to a point where God could no longer stay His hand (*cf*. [Genesis 15:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+15.16&t=NKJV)), was Jezebel’s acquisition of Naboth’s vineyard for Ahab. Jezebel, through forged letters, brought about Naboth’s death in order that Ahab might possess his vineyard; and Ahab himself became a partaker of this deed by subsequently possessing the vineyard.

And because of this, *judgment of a nature befitting this sin* was pronounced upon both Ahab and Jezebel. The Lord said of Ahab, “*In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your blood, even yours*”; and the Lord said of Jezebel, “*The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel*” ([1 Kings 21:1-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+21.1-23&t=NKJV); *cf*. [1 Kings 22:35-38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+22.35-38&t=NKJV); [2 Kings 9:30-37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Kings+9.30-37&t=NKJV)).

Following this pronouncement of judgment upon both Ahab and Jezebel, Scripture provides a summary statement concerning the lives of these two individuals:

*But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up.*

*And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.* ([1 Kings 21:25-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+21.25-26&t=NKJV))

Jezebel in the Old Testament sets forth the *epitome of corruption*, and there was a woman teaching in the church in Thyatira whose influence and corrupt teachings were compared to those of Jezebel.

During Jezebel’s day in the Old Testament, corruption was produced by bringing the things of the world over into the camp of Israel; and during the day of her counterpart in the New Testament, corruption was produced through the same means — bringing the things of the world over into the Church.

*A terrible judgment* was pronounced upon Jezebel in the Old Testament ([1 Kings 21:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+21.23&t=NKJV); *cf*. [2 Kings 9:30-37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Kings+9.30-37&t=NKJV)), and *a similar judgment* was pronounced upon her counterpart and those who followed her ways in the New Testament ([Revelation 2:21-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.21-23&t=NKJV)). The message concerning Jezebel in Revelation chapter two, along with the Old Testament counterpart, is clearly stated for *all* to behold: God will not tolerate Christians entering into an unholy relationship with the world. Such a relationship is associated with *fornication, idolatry*, and *adultery*. And a relationship with the world of this nature, according to Scripture, can end *only one way*. It can end *only in death* ([Revelation 2:20-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.20-23&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Romans 8:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.13&t=NKJV)).

Doctrine, Deep Things

*Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths* [deep things] *of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden*.

*But hold fast what you have till I come.* ([Revelation 2:24-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.24-25&t=NKJV))

The teachings of the woman called “Jezebel” in the church in Thyatira are referred to in a twofold, synonymous respect:

1) The “*doctrine*” of Jezebel.

2) The “*the depths* [deep things] *of Satan*.”

That is, what is referred to as “*the doctrine of Jezebel*” had to do with “*the depths* [deep things] *of Satan*.”

*God* has His “*deep things*,” and *Satan* has his “*deep things*” ([1 Corinthians 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.10&t=NKJV); [Revelation 2:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.24&t=NKJV)).

*The deep things of God* are associated with that which is separate from the present world kingdom under Satan, *the coming world kingdom under Christ*. Such is evident from the context of [1 Corinthians 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+2.10&t=NKJV).

*The deep things of Satan*, on the other hand, are associated with that which is diametrically opposed to the coming kingdom of Christ, *the present kingdom under Satan*. Such is evident from the context of [Revelation 2:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.24&t=NKJV).

1) As These Things Affect Israel

Israel’s standing among the nations is that of *firstborn*. When God instructed Moses to say to Pharaoh, “*Israel is my son, even my firstborn*” ([Exodus 4:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.22&t=NKJV)), God was announcing the proper place that Israel had been called to occupy in relation to the Gentile nations of the earth. Israel, as God’s firstborn son, was the nation in possession of the birthright; and no Gentile nation *has ever or will ever* come into such a position. Among the nations of the earth, *a firstborn status is reserved for Israel alone.*

God has stated concerning Israel, “*You only have I known of all the families of the earth*.” God has chosen Israel to be “*a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth*.” ([Deuteronomy 7:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+7.6&t=NKJV); [14:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+14.2&t=NKJV); [Amos 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Amos+3.2&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Psalm 147:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+147.19-20&t=NKJV); [Romans 9:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+9.4-5&t=NKJV)).

During the days of Jezebel in the Old Testament, one of the world’s false religions was brought over into the camp of Israel, into the worship of the one true and living God.

This was done under the direction and leadership of Satan in an effort to thwart the plans and purposes of God concerning Israel, God’s firstborn son, the nation in possession of the rights of primogeniture.

Israel had previously been called out of Egypt to ultimately realize these rights in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The introduction of Baal worship into the camp of Israel, through Jezebel, was nothing more than Satan’s attempt to prevent Israel from assuming her God-ordained position as “*a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation*” ([Exodus 19:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.6&t=NKJV)).

The birthright possessed by Israel consisted of three things:

1) *Ruler of the household*, under and for the Father.

2) Exercising the office of *priest in the family*.

3) The reception of *a double portion of all the Father’s goods*.

*The first segment of the birthright* placed the firstborn in the position of “heir” with respect to a *rule* of the Father’s house, under and for the Father. “Sonship” implies *rulership* and carries the thought of *supremacy*. In this respect, Israel, a national power, was to be *the supreme nation and rule over all the other nations — all the Gentile nations of the earth.*

This earth, a province in the kingdom of God, constitutes *the Father’s house* when the birthright with respect to nations is in view; and *Israel, as God’s firstborn son*, was to bear rule over all the nations in this house, under and for the Father.

Israel occupied the standing as *firstborn among all nations* while still in Egypt, but Israel would not actually realize these rights until the nation had been removed from Egypt and established in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

*The second segment of the birthright* would place Israel in *a priestly* position with respect to both God and the nations. Israel was to be a “*kingdom of priests*” in the midst of the nations ([Exodus 19:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.6&t=NKJV)), resulting in the nations being blessed by and through Israel in accord with [Genesis 12:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.1-3&t=NKJV).

A first-mention principle relating to these blessings had previously been established in [Genesis 9:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+9.25-27&t=NKJV). “*The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*” ([Exodus 3:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+3.6&t=NKJV)) was *first “the God of Shem”* ([Genesis 9:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+9.26&t=NKJV)). Neither Ham nor Japheth had a God, and the only way either could receive spiritual blessings was by and through Shem and his God.

Or, to say it another way, the descendants of Ham and Japheth (the Gentile nations) are “*without God in the world*” ([Ephesians 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.12&t=NKJV)) and can receive spiritual blessings *only* through the descendants of Shem (the nation of Israel) and their God. Although the lineage of Shem also, among others, includes the descendants of Ishmael and the sons of Keturah, spiritual blessings for nations emanating from these lines are derived through the same means as those for the Gentile nations (for, in this respect, these nations are looked upon as Gentile nations [[Genesis 17:18-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+17.18-21&t=NKJV); [21:5-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+21.5-12&t=NKJV); [22:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.2&t=NKJV); [25:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25.1-6&t=NKJV)]).

*The third segment of the birthright* placed Israel in a position to receive *the double portion* of all the Father’s goods. This segment of the birthright, as the first two segments, also had to do with Israel’s position among the nations. There are two spheres of governmental power and authority in a rule over the Gentile nations — *earthly* and *heavenly* — and the double portion of the birthright pertained to Israel ultimately coming into possession of *both* (*cf*. [Genesis 22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV)).

The way was opened under the leadership of Moses at Kadesh-Barnea, and later under Joshua on the east side of Jordan, for Israel to go into the land and realize *the earthly portion* of this inheritance; but the heavenly portion of the inheritance was not to be opened to the nation until almost fifteen hundred years later. It was necessary that *both* be extended to Israel at some point in the corridors of time, for Israel, as the firstborn, was the appointed heir.

Under Moses and Joshua, when *the earthly portion* of the inheritance was in the offing, God Himself dwelt in the midst of the nation; some fifteen hundred years later, when *the heavenly portion* of the inheritance was in the offing, God Himself once again (in the person of His Son) dwelt in the midst of the nation.

Satan is the “*god of this world* [age].” He is the “*anointed cherub* [messianic angel],” the one created to rule and reign ([Ezekiel 28:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.14&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 4:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+4.4&t=NKJV)). Satan and his angels presently rule the earth through the Gentile nations. *They rule from the heavens through counterparts among the Gentile nations upon the earth* (note [Daniel 10:12ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.12ff&t=NKJV): the “*prince of the kingdom of Persia*,” and the “*kings of Persia*” [[Daniel 10:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.13&t=NKJV)] are heavenly beings [angels in the kingdom of Satan] who rule through counterparts in the kingdom of Persia [Iran today] on earth. And it is the same with the Grecian kingdom [[Daniel 10:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.20&t=NKJV)] and all other Gentile powers, past and present).

The nation of Israel though has been placed in *an entirely separate and distinct position* from that which are occupied by the Gentile nations. Israel is not to be “*reckoned among the nations*” ([Numbers 23:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+23.9&t=NKJV)). Israel is not a nation through which Satan and his angels rule, as they do through the Gentile nations. The angelic prince of Israel in Daniel chapter ten (where the princes of Gentile nations are mentioned) is *Michael* ([Daniel 10:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.13&t=NKJV), [21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.21&t=NKJV)); and Michael is *not* one of the princes ruling under Satan.

Thus, the deep things of Satan in relation to Israel and her calling in the Old Testament involved taking things from his kingdom, from the Gentile nations of the earth, and placing them among a separate and distinct people who were not to be reckoned among those nations.

In the case of his work through Jezebel, it was Baal worship that was transferred from the Gentile nations into the camp of Israel. And the Israelites, following Baal, associated themselves with Gentile idolatry and could, under no circumstances, realize their calling as *firstborn* while in this condition.

Rather than Israel ruling over the Gentile nations of the earth, Satan’s rule over these same nations would continue unabated, with Israel uprooted from her land and scattered among these nations. And rather than Israel realizing national blessings, with the Gentile nations in turn being blessed, Israel would incur God’s wrath. It was to this end that Satan vented his wrath against Israel throughout the Old Testament, and it is to this end that he continues to vent his wrath against this same nation today.

(God’s dealings with Israel on a national basis have been interrupted and temporarily discontinued. Israel has been set aside for a dispensation, during which time God is removing from the Gentiles a people for His name.

But Satan knows that God’s discontinuance of His dealings with Israel in this manner is only temporary. He knows that God will once again turn to and deal with Israel relative to the nation’s standing as *firstborn* [else the complete, revealed program of God — that Satan knows all too well — would remain unfulfilled]. Satan knows that Israel is yet to be placed at the head of the nations upon the earth, with the Gentile nations being blessed through Israel; and he continues to do all within his power to prevent this from happening.)

2) As These Things Affect Christians

A part of that which was being made known to “*the principalities and powers in heavenly places*” in time past through Israel is now being made known through the Church ([Ephesians 3:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.9-11&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Ephesians 6:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.11ff&t=NKJV)). In time past, Israel was in possession of both *earthly* and *heavenly* promises and blessings, having to do with both *earthly* and *heavenly* spheres of power and authority in the kingdom ([Genesis 22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 11:8-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.8-16&t=NKJV)). However, at the time of Christ’s first advent, Israel forfeited *the heavenly* *portion* of the kingdom; and an entirely new creation, *the one new man “in Christ,”* was called into existence to be the recipient of the proffered positions of power and authority with Christ from *the heavens* ([Matthew 21:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.43&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 2:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.9-10&t=NKJV)).

The calling possessed by the Church is to ultimately inhabit, with Christ, the very realm that Satan and his angels presently inhabit. The incumbent rulers (Satan and his angels) have forfeited their right to continue exercising power and authority from this realm, and Israel has forfeited her right to one day supplant these rulers. Thus, within God’s plan for the ages, the Church was brought into existence to ultimately occupy *this heavenly realm* (*cf*. [Ephesians 6:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.11-12&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.1&t=NKJV)). Although Israel still retains her earthly calling and will yet be removed from the nations of the earth to fulfill this calling, the Church will fulfill God’s plans and purposes for *the heavenly portion* of the kingdom (along with certain Old Testament saints who looked beyond an earthly calling to a heavenly [*cf*. [Matthew 8:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+8.11-12&t=NKJV); [Luke 13:28-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+13.28-29&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 11:8-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.8-16&t=NKJV)]).

Christians are the ones who will be called forth to dwell in *the heavens* and reign as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom. Satan, knowing these things (things that very few Christians seem to have any understanding of at all [*cf*. [2 Corinthians 4:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+4.3-4&t=NKJV)]), *presently not only directs his wrath against Israel but against the Church as well.*

The reason Satan placed “*that woman Jezebel*” in the church in Thyatira is the same reason that he placed “Jezebel” in the camp of Israel during Old Testament days. The deep things of Satan, introduced into the camp of Israel in the Old Testament and into the church in Thyatira in the New Testament, have to do with the incumbent ruler’s (Satan’s) efforts to thwart God’s plans and purposes concerning others moving into regal positions of power and authority presently under his (Satan’s) dominion and control.

Satan has done, is doing, and will continue to do all within his power to prevent either Israel or the Church from realizing their respective calling. And the intensification of his efforts during the closing days of the dispensation in which we presently live is something that Christians who aspire to be overcomers and realize their calling *must* be keenly aware of and understand.

Satan’s efforts in his warfare against Christians today has *one primary goal* in view: to overcome Christians rather than seeing Christians overcome him, resulting in their disqualification to occupy proffered positions in the coming kingdom of Christ.

*The deep things of Satan* introduced into the Church today, as in the camp of Israel during Elijah’s day, have to do with the things of the world brought over into the things of God — the world in the Church — resulting in Christians (as the Israelites) being led astray, into the things of the world. And, in the light of the Old Testament counterpart, this is what is involved in Jezebel’s seduction of the Lord’s servants “*to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols*” ([Revelation 2:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.20&t=NKJV)); and those Christians, defiled after this fashion, through her efforts, who fail to repent of their deeds, will suffer “*death*” ([Revelation 2:21-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.21-23&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Romans 8:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.13&t=NKJV)), which is undoubtedly an allusion to the previously mentioned “*second death*” ([Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV)).

Christians, as the Israelites, possess a birthright; and this birthright consists of the same three things as the one possessed by Israel:

1) *Ruler of the household*, under and for the Father.

2) Exercising the office of *priest in the family*.

3) The reception of *a double portion of all the Father’s goods*.

Overcoming Christians will realize *the first* aspect of the birthright by and through ruling as “*joint-heirs*” with Christ in the kingdom ([Romans 8:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.17&t=NKJV)), *the second* by and through ruling as “*kings and priests*” ([Revelation 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.10&t=NKJV)), and *the third* by and through coming into possession of both earthly and heavenly aspects of the inheritance with Christ — ruling from *the heavens over the earth* ([Psalm 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.8&t=NKJV), [9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.9&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.4&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Genesis 24:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.10&t=NKJV), [36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.36&t=NKJV), [53](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.53&t=NKJV); [John 16:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+16.13-15&t=NKJV)).

Non-overcoming Christians though will have forfeited their rights of primogeniture, realizing no aspect of the birthright. They will not be among the “*many sons*” Christ is bringing into glory to rule “*the world* [inhabited world] *to come*” ([Hebrews 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.5&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.10&t=NKJV)). *The deep things of Satan* will have accomplished their purpose in the lives of such Christians; and they, as Esau, when they realize that which could have been theirs, *will lift up their voices and weep* ([Hebrews 12:14-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.14-17&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Genesis 25:27-34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25.27-34&t=NKJV); [27:26-38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+27.26-38&t=NKJV)).

Kingly Power

One day the Lord Jesus Christ is going to receive a kingdom. “*The kingdoms of this world*” will become “*the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ*, *and He shall reign forever and ever*” [Revelation 11:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.15&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Psalm 2:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.1ff&t=NKJV); [110:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+110.1ff&t=NKJV); [Daniel 7:9-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.9-14&t=NKJV)). Satan and his angels are to be put down; then Christ and His co-heirs (forming His bride) are to move in and take over the government. This is the time in which the overcomer’s promise given to Christians in the church in Thyatira will be fulfilled.

The main thrust of the matter leading into and including the overcomer’s promise centers on and in two world kingdoms — *the present kingdom of Satan*, and *the coming kingdom of Christ*. The overcomer’s promise then revolves around being victorious over the things of the present kingdom (introduced into the Church by Satan through “*that woman Jezebel*”).

A Christian allowing himself to be overcome by the things of the present kingdom will be denied participation in the coming kingdom, but a Christian overcoming the things of the present kingdom will be given “*power over the nations*” in the coming kingdom.

Concerning the Christians’ present activities in relation to one kingdom or the other, there is a specific promise concerning recompense: “*I will give to each one of you according to your works*” ([Revelation 2:23b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.23b&t=NKJV)).

*Christians involving themselves with the present kingdom of Satan will be recompensed accordingly.*

*Christians looking out ahead toward the coming kingdom of Christ, refusing to involve themselves with the present kingdom, will also be recompensed accordingly.*

*The time* for the rendering of a “*just recompense*” to every Christian, according to the context and overall message of chapters one through three, will be at the future “*judgment*” of Christians — the judgment seat of Christ; the *issue*, as in [1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV), will be “works,” with a view to every Christian being revealed as either an overcomer or a non-overcomer, on the basis of works; and the *outcome* of this revelation has been clearly made known: *Christians revealed as overcomers will be given “power over the nations,” while those Christians revealed as non-overcomers will be denied such power.*

That the overcomer’s promises are not only *millennial in their scope of fulfillment* but are also connected with *regal positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom* is further made plain by the message to the church in Thyatira.

No such scene as that which is depicted in verses twenty-six and twenty-seven exists during the present dispensation preceding the Millennium; nor will such a scene exist during the eternal ages following the Millennium. And that which is true of the overcomer’s promise here is equally true of the overcomer’s promises throughout chapters two and three. Christians before the judgment seat of Christ will be judged on the basis of works to determine their status relative to *overcoming*, with a view to *regal positions in the kingdom*.

The Morning Star

Not only were the overcoming Christians in Thyatira promised kingly power with Christ but they were promised “*the morning star*,” which is *Christ Himself* ([Revelation 22:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.16&t=NKJV)). In [Revelation 2:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-28&t=NKJV), the promise of “*the morning star*” appears immediately following the promise concerning “*power over the nations*”; and in [Revelation 22:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.16&t=NKJV), the identification of Christ as “*the bright and morning star*” immediately follows His identification as “*the root and offspring of David*.” The clear implication in the latter reference, in the light of the overcomer’s promise to the church in Thyatira, is an allusion to His regal position as David’s Son. The promise of “*the morning star*” to the overcoming Christian is an apparent reference to a special, peculiar relationship with Christ, which can only *be connected with His reign.*

The expressions “*morning star*” in [Revelation 2:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.28&t=NKJV) and “*bright and morning sta*r” in [Revelation 22:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.16&t=NKJV) are used of Christ’s relationship with His Church (anticipating His reign), as the expression “*Sun of righteousness*” in [Malachi 4:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Malachi+4.2&t=NKJV) is used of His relationship with Israel (anticipating His reign).

*The morning star* appears in the sky before the dawn, shortly before *the sun* appears on the horizon to lighten the sky. The apparent thought is that Christ will appear as the “*bright and morning star*” for the Church near the close of the time of this world’s darkness; and He will appear to Israel, following the darkness, as the “*Sun of righteousness . . . with healing in His wings*.”

Christ will first complete His dealings with the Church, with overcoming Christians being brought into a special, peculiar relationship with Him, *anticipating their reign as co-heirs*. Christ will then turn to Israel and deal with His brethren after the flesh in such a fashion that their future confession, as recorded in Isaiah chapter fifty-three will include the statement (in fulfillment of [Malachi 4:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Malachi+4.2&t=NKJV)):

*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.* ([Isaiah 53:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+53.5&t=NKJV))

Concluding Thoughts:

There is a battle presently being waged, it is being fought on two fronts, and the central issue involves *governmental control over the earth*. This battle is being waged by Satan and his angels, and it is being waged against Israel on one front and against the Church on the other.

God has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate to “*the principalities and powers in heavenly places*,” through Israel in the Old Testament and through the Church in the New Testament, that a completely new order of rulers (sons) is about to be brought upon the scene. And Satan with his angels, continuing to have this demonstrated to them, remain constantly at war against these two creations God has called into existence to be heirs in the coming kingdom.

Satan knew in the beginning when he sought governmental power and authority beyond that which had been delegated to him, seeking to be “*like the Most High*” ([Isaiah 14:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.13-14&t=NKJV)), that he must be wholly successful or face eternal judgment; and he knows today that failure in his onslaughts against Israel and the Church can only bring about his long-impending, awaiting judgment.

Thus, the picture we presently have set before us is that of warfare being waged by a mighty fallen celestial being and his minions — *the god of this age and those ruling under him* — who knows that his time is short unless he can somehow thwart God’s plans and purposes concerning Israel and the Church. That is what the warfare is about.

Satan knows from his own experience in the past that in failure there can be no room for mercy. Resultantly, he placed a Jezebel in the Camp of Israel in the Old Testament, and he placed a Jezebel in the Church in the New Testament. These two moves had to do with the *deep things of Satan*, he continues with *his deep things* today, and he will continue as long as he is allowed to remain in power.

*Nothing has changed in his plans and methods; nor will anything change, except a progressive intensification of his efforts as the dispensation draws to a close.*

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Chapter 9

**Clothed in White Garments**

*He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.* ([Revelation 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV))

The message to the church in Sardis presents a continued, extended view of the “children” of the adulterous woman, Jezebel, from the preceding message to the church in Thyatira. And matters can be viewed in this manner, as Scripture moves from one epistle to the next, for most of the Christians comprising the church in Sardis possessed a name that they *lived*, though they were actually *dead* ([Revelation 3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.1&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Revelation 2:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.23&t=NKJV)).

Along with a continued, extended view of the church in this *spiritually destitute condition*, attention is also called to a “*few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments*” ([Revelation 3:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.4&t=NKJV)). Thus, there was a remnant within this church, comparable to the remnant of seven thousand who had not bowed their knee to Baal during Elijah and Jezebel’s day in the Old Testament ([1 Kings 19:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+19.18&t=NKJV)).

This remnant in the Church in Sardis was comprised of those Christians presently overcoming the world, the flesh, and the devil. And these are the ones who will one day be revealed as overcomers, subsequently realizing the overcomer’s promises during the 1,000-year reign of Christ.

Many expositors have sought to associate the church in Sardis with the Reformation period in Church history, which began with events during the sixteenth century. The allusion to this period of time and beyond — if the message to the church in Sardis is to be associated with a particular period in Church history (though not really to the Reformation *per se*) — would appear to be correct, with the emphasis placed in two realms:

1) That which continued in existence within the mainstream of Christendom from the days represented by the preceding message to the church in Thyatira.

2) That which would ultimately result within a smaller segment of Christendom because of the Reformation, represented by the succeeding message to the church in Philadelphia.

And as previously seen, these two segments of the church in Sardis were represented by *those who were dead* ([Revelation 3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.1&t=NKJV)) and by *those who had not defiled their garments* ([Revelation 3:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.4&t=NKJV)). The following two epistles, the messages to the church in Philadelphia and the church in Laodicea, then project these two segments of Christendom on into the latter days of the dispensation. They will exist side-by-side for a time, with the Church increasingly becoming more and more Laodicean, “*until the whole*” has been leavened (*cf*. [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV); [Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV)).

The Reformation itself was not a recovery of the doctrine surrounding “*that blessed hope*” but rather a recovery of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. The reformers gave little attention to events surrounding Christ’s return. Although they knew Christ would return at some future date, they turned their attention almost exclusively to evangelizing the unsaved.

Many of the reformers looked upon the Church as an instrument through which God would ultimately effect world conversion, something to be accomplished *prior* to His Son’s return. And, to these men, Satan’s main thrust to counter this goal was channeled through the Roman Catholic Church, with each succeeding pope holding the dubious honor of being the Antichrist.

The origin of much of the false postmillennial thought, still present to some extent in Christendom today, can be traced to the eschatological views held by many of the reformers. Postmillennial thought in Christendom today though is usually seen in a different form than in the past. Today, it can be seen mainly in an increasingly popular ideology known as *theonomy*. This is a name given to the false teaching that the Church will be instrumental in bringing about the kingdom of God on earth by and through gradually taking control of the present government under Satan.

However, there is another side to the picture surrounding the course that Christendom began to take at the time of the Reformation. The truth concerning the return of Christ within the framework of premillennial thought, also present within the Church today, is something that likewise grew out of the Reformation.

During the seventeenth century, small numbers of Bible students in Europe (who, themselves, were among those ultimately reached with the true message of the gospel of the grace of God as a result of the Reformation) began turning their attention to the prophetic Scriptures. Their work was furthered by other students in the eighteenth century; but the main impetus awaited the work of students in the nineteenth century, who built upon and brought to fruition the work of their predecessors.

It was during this latter period that the great advances in prophetic study were made, according a proper treatment to the numerous truths surrounding Christ’s return. The recovery of these truths was accompanied by a great resurgence in missionary endeavor, and it is this *recovery* and *resurgence* that appears to mark the beginning of that period covered concurrently by the messages to the church in Philadelphia and the church in Laodicea.

There is nothing bad said about the church in Philadelphia, and there is nothing *good* said about the church in Laodicea. An apex of the outworking of that which had its beginning during the days of Martin Luther can be seen in the message to the church in Philadelphia. And the end of that which began centuries earlier — seen on the one hand when the leaven was placed in the three measures of meal, and on the other hand through that which occurred during the days of Constantine and the ensuing years — can be seen reaching its completion at the end of the dispensation in the message to the church in Laodicea.

Dead . . . Not Defiled

The thought of many of those in the church in Sardis described as *living, but being dead*, must be looked upon in an opposite sense to the thought of a few in the church having garments that were “*not defiled*” ([Revelation 3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.1&t=NKJV), [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.4&t=NKJV)). In this sense, “*dead*” would be equated with *defiled*, and “*not defiled*” would be equated with *living*. Christians alone are in view, those capable of producing *works* pleasing to the Lord ([Revelation 3:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.1-2&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Ephesians 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.10&t=NKJV)).

“Death” in a *spiritual sense* is associated with both the unregenerate and the regenerate. The unregenerate are spoken of as being “*dead in trespasses and sins*” because of *unbelief* ([Ephesians 2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1&t=NKJV)); and the regenerate can be spoken of in the sense that they are presented in [Revelation 3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.1&t=NKJV) — *living, but being dead* — because of *unfaithfulness* (*cf*. [1 Timothy 5:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+5.6&t=NKJV); [James 5:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+5.5&t=NKJV)), associated with what James calls *a dead faith.*

(Note that the words “faith” and “believe” are cognate words in the Greek text. The former is a noun and the latter a verb. And either word can be used to refer to the same thing [*e.g.*, [Acts 16:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+16.31&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8&t=NKJV)].)

James is the great epistle dealing with *faith* and *works* in the sense that they are presented in the messages to the seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three. Works emanate out of faith; and [James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV) refers to *a dead faith* that is incapable of producing the type of works necessary to bring faith to its proper goal, the exact condition of those in Sardis whose existing state (“dead”) was associated with *works*. They possessed works, but these works did not emanate from a living, active faith. Rather, such works emanated from a dead, inactive faith and were the type of works that would be burned at the judgment seat (works described in [1 Corinthians 3:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.12&t=NKJV) by three combustible materials, “*wood, hay, straw*”).

The distinguishing characteristic between those who were *dead* and those with *undefiled garments* in the message to the church in Sardis is, thus, in their “works.” This is really the overriding subject matter in each of the seven messages to the seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three. Each message, following descriptive aspects of Christ as *Judge* in the midst of the churches (in keeping with the description given in chapter one), begins the same way: “*I know your works* . . . .” ([Revelation 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.2&t=NKJV), [9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.9&t=NKJV), [13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.13&t=NKJV), [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.19&t=NKJV); [3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.1&t=NKJV), [8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.8&t=NKJV), [15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.15&t=NKJV)).

And to properly understand the entire matter, along with the review and manifestation of two types of works at the judgment seat of Christ, one must understand the relationship between faith and works in James chapter two.

James, as all of the New Testament epistles, deals centrally with *the future salvation of the soul* rather than the salvation that we presently possess, the salvation of the spirit (*cf*. [James 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV), [21-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21-22&t=NKJV); [5:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+5.19-20&t=NKJV)). Both are wrought on the basis of *works*. Our present salvation (salvation of the spirit) has been wrought on the basis of Christ’s past, completed work; and our future salvation (salvation of the soul) will be wrought on the basis of the present works of those who have been justified on the basis of Christ’s past, completed work. The review of works at the judgment seat will be to determine *the type of works*, with a view to the salvation *or* loss of the soul.

[James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV) opens with two self-answering questions, and the structure of these questions in the Greek text requires that both be answered in the negative (the Greek negative “*me*” appears in the latter question [designating a “no” response], and the integrally, inseparable nature of the two questions shows that the *first* must be answered in the same sense). The first question presents the relationship between faith and works in connection with *profit*, and the second question presents the relationship between faith and works in connection with *salvation*.

These two questions could possibly be better understood by translating the verse,

*My brethren, if any one says he has faith, but does not have works, he cannot profit, can he? Faith cannot save him, can it?* ([James 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14&t=NKJV))

“Profit” and “salvation” are linked together in such a manner in [James 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14&t=NKJV) that one cannot be realized apart from the other. That is, apart from an accrual of “profit,” *salvation* cannot be realized; or, to state it another way, an accrual of “profit” leads to (is for the purpose of) the realization of *salvation* (at a future date). And James specifically states that neither can be realized by faith alone. *Works* must enter in and have their proper place in the matter.

One cannot profit apart from an initial investment, and one is in no position to procure the salvation of which James speaks apart from presently possessing salvation. The Greek word translated “profit” is derived from a root word that means “to increase”; and the thought of an “increase” does not enter into the picture until one has an initial supply, making an “increase,” or “profit,” possible.

“Profit” is always something in addition to that which one already possesses. Initial investments, from which individuals can profit, are possessed only by the Lord’s own servants (Christians). There is no such thing as the word “profit” being used in this sense in connection with the unsaved, for they have no initial investment in this realm.

The parable of the talents ([Matthew 25:14-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.14-30&t=NKJV)) and the parable of the pounds ([Luke 19:11-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.11-27&t=NKJV)) provide two of the best Scriptural examples concerning “profit” on an initial investment in relation to the Lord’s servants during the present day and time. As brought out in these parables, the Lord has delivered *all* His goods to *all* His servants and has left them with the command, “*Do business till I come*” ([Luke 19:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.13&t=NKJV)).

The servants of the Lord are to trade and traffic in the Lord’s business during His time of absence. Those who do so, under the leadership of the Lord, will realize a “profit” (*cf*. [Matthew 25:15-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.15-17&t=NKJV), [19-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.19-23&t=NKJV); [Luke 19:15-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.15-19&t=NKJV)). And by realizing a profit, or increase, on the initial investment, they will experience the salvation of their souls (*cf*. [Matthew 16:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.24-27&t=NKJV)). On the other hand, those who refuse to use the initial investment will not only remain profitless but they will, as a consequence, suffer “loss” (*cf*. [Matthew 25:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.15&t=NKJV), [18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.18-19&t=NKJV), [24-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.24-30&t=NKJV); [Luke 19:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.15&t=NKJV), [20-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.20-26&t=NKJV)). They will experience the loss of their souls (*cf*. [Matthew 16:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.24-27&t=NKJV)).

Consequently, that which is involved in [James 2:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14&t=NKJV), as explained in subsequent verses, is simply *faithfulness* to one’s calling (resulting in works), or *unfaithfulness* to one’s calling (resulting in no works [or valueless works not associated with faith]). Works of the nature referred to in this verse emanate out of “faith” and bring faith to its proper goal, which is the salvation of one’s soul ([James 2:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.22&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9&t=NKJV)). Apart from such a manifestation of faith, giving rise to works, there can be *no profit*; nor can the inherently connected *salvation* follow (the salvation of the *soul*).

In the message to the church in Sardis in Revelation chapter three, two types of works are in view. The first type has to do with works *not emanating* from faith, and the second type has to do with works of the opposite kind, those *emanating from faith*.

The first type of works are those performed by Christians apart from the leadership of the Lord. *Faith*, associated with the Lord’s leadership, is not involved; and such works are *invariably* done under the leadership of man for the praise, honor, and glory of man.

The second type of works are those performed by Christians under the leadership of the Lord. *Faith*, associated with the Lord’s leadership, is the primary factor; and such works *always* redound to the praise, honor, and glory of the Lord.

Both types of works [as seen in [1 Corinthians 3:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.12-15&t=NKJV)] will be very evident at the judgment seat — those that are worthless (comparable to “*wood, hay, straw*”) and those of intrinsic value (comparable to “*gold, silver, precious stones*”).

The result of the manifestation of *works* at the judgment seat will be twofold:

1) The revelation of *an accrual of profit*, resulting in the salvation of the soul on one hand.

2) The revelation of *no profit,* resulting in the loss of the soul on the other hand.

Such will be the end of all works viewed in the seven messages to the seven churches.

White Garments

The “*white garments*” in which the overcomers in Sardis are to be clothed can only have to do with *the wedding garment* mentioned in [Matthew 22:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.11-12&t=NKJV) and [Revelation 19:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.8&t=NKJV). The overcomers, synonymous with the bride, are to “array [cloth] themselves” rather than “be arrayed [clothed]”; and this fact should be reflected in the translation of both [Revelation 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV) and [Revelation 19:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.8&t=NKJV). The verb appears in the middle voice in the Greek text in both instances, showing the subject (the overcomers, forming the bride) participating in the results of the action, necessitating the thought that the overcomers are the ones who, themselves, will accomplish this feat.

The “*fine linen, clean and bright* [KJV: ‘white’]” is specifically said, in [Revelation 19:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.8&t=NKJV), to be the “*righteousness* [‘righteous acts’] *of the saints*.” The word translated “righteousness” (KJV) is *plural* in the Greek text and can only be a reference to “righteous acts [*i.e*., the ‘righteousnesses of saints’],” which are specifically said to make up the wedding garment.

Such righteous acts are synonymous with works emanating from faithfulness to one’s calling; and unfaithful Christians, accordingly, will not possess works of this nature. Their works, revealed as comparable to “*wood, hay, straw*” at the judgment seat, will be burned (*cf*. [Isaiah 64:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+64.6&t=NKJV)); and without acceptable works/righteous acts, they will possess no material to make up the “*fine linen*” comprising the wedding garment. Thus, such Christians will appear naked and ashamed in the presence of their Lord in that day.

The two types of righteousness in [Romans 5:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.17&t=NKJV) and [Revelation 19:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.8&t=NKJV) correspond to the two types of justification in [James 2:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.24&t=NKJV) (one is acquired on the basis of the work of another [Christ], and the other is acquired on the basis of the Christians’ own works).

There is a justification by *faith*, and there is a justification by *works*. Only those who have been justified by faith are in a position to be justified by works. That is, a person must *first* be justified on the basis of the work of Another [*i.e.*, Christ] before he can be justified on the basis of his own works (emanating out of faithfulness to his calling).

Or, to state the matter within another frame of reference, note the Christians’ calling. A person must *first* be “called” before he can be “called out” of the “called.” He must *first* be a part of the body (be “*in Christ*”) before he can be removed from the body (removed to form the bride, comprising the antitype of Eve removed from Adam’s body to form his bride).

Those in Sardis who had not defiled their garments would be allowed to walk with Christ, arrayed *in white garments*. They would not be found among those whose works were lacking, those described by the word “*dead*.” But even to the Christians with defiled garments the call was to “*Remember . . . and hold fast, and repent*” ([Revelation 3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.3&t=NKJV)).

It was not too late for those possessing works that would one day be shown worthless at the judgment seat to become faithful servants of the Lord and produce works of intrinsic value. The overcomer’s promise was extended to *all* in Sardis; but not all would heed the message, overcome, and realize this promise.

The clear, simple lesson taught by comparing [Matthew 22:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.11-12&t=NKJV); [Revelation 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV); and [Revelation 19:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.8&t=NKJV) is *the absolute necessity* of possessing a wedding garment if one would be numbered among those forming the bride of Christ. The wedding garment is associated with *overcoming* ([Revelation 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV)), *possessing righteous acts* (works emanating out of faithfulness [[James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV); [Revelation 19:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.8&t=NKJV)]), and *gaining admittance to festivities surrounding the marriage of the Lamb* ([Matthew 22:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.11-12&t=NKJV); [Revelation 19:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.9&t=NKJV)). *The overcomers alone* will possess the wedding garment, and *this garment alone* will be recognized as the proper attire necessary for admittance to and participation in the marriage festivities.

The Book of Life

The possibility of Christians having their names blotted out of the book of life, in accord with [Revelation 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV), has troubled many individuals. Such individuals view the book of life as a record containing the names of all who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and they know that for a Christian to have his name blotted out of such a book is an absolute impossibility.

One’s eternal salvation is just as secure as the finished work of Christ upon which it rests. And to infer that a Christian could possibly one day lose his eternal salvation would be bringing into question the complete efficacy of this finished work, or of the corresponding work of the Spirit breathing life into the one having no life (on the basis of Christ’s finished work).

The problem emanates from wrongly associating “*the Book of Life*” with *eternal salvation*. God has many books; and in these books He keeps records of many different things, records that will one day be opened (*cf*. [Psalm 56:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+56.8&t=NKJV); [139:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+139.16&t=NKJV); [Zechariah 5:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zechariah+5.1-3&t=NKJV); [Malachi 3:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Malachi+3.16&t=NKJV); [Revelation 5:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.1-2&t=NKJV); [13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.8&t=NKJV); [20:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.12&t=NKJV)).

Note, for example, that at the future judgment of the unsaved dead in [Revelation 20:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.11-15&t=NKJV) a number of books will be opened, including “*the Book of Life*” ([Revelation 20:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.12&t=NKJV)). God has a library in heaven, and *the Book of life* is only one book within this library. A book that seems to be entirely separate and distinct, but often confused with the book of life is *the Lamb’s Book of Life* in [Revelation 13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.8&t=NKJV) (*cf*. [Revelation 21:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.27&t=NKJV)). This book would appear to be the place wherein the names of redeemed individuals have been inscribed rather than the book of life in [Revelation 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV); [20:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.12&t=NKJV).

The Book of Life will be opened at the judgments of both the saved and the unsaved. The entire scene in [Revelation 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV) has to do with issues of the judgment seat of Christ, with t*he Book of life* being the only book from God’s library of books singled out and mentioned by name. The same thing can be found in the judgment of the unsaved dead in [Revelation 20:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.11-15&t=NKJV). *The Book of Life* alone is singled out and mentioned by name.

The purpose and content of the Book of Life are clearly revealed in [Revelation 20:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.12&t=NKJV): “. . . *the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works*.” The Book of Life is a book, among other books, containing *the deeds/works* of individuals, both those of the saved and those of the unsaved; and from the emphasis placed upon the Book of Life in connection with both judgments, along with information concerning other books in Scripture, one could conclude that this is probably God’s primary record book containing *the deeds/works* of every individual.

Other books also record *deeds/works*, such as those mentioned in [Psalm 56:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+56.8&t=NKJV) and [Malachi 3:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Malachi+3.16&t=NKJV). But the primary record book in this realm, one in which a name can be retained or blotted out (depending on the record of that individual contained in the book), appears to be “*the Book of Life*.”

The blotting of one’s name out of the Book of Life in [Revelation 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV) is strictly for the non-overcomer, with the Messianic Era in view, and has nothing to do with eternal verities. One’s relationship to Christ must be looked upon as a settled, closed matter prior to judgment, *a matter that can never enter into any future judgment in any fashion or form.*

Different companies of the saved are judged at different times, with their works in view (works recorded in books [[Ezekiel 20:34-38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+20.34-38&t=NKJV); [Matthew 25:34-40](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.34-40&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV); [Revelation 20:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4-6&t=NKJV)]); and the unsaved are judged at a subsequent time, with their works in view as well (works also recorded in books [[Revelation 20:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.11-15&t=NKJV)]).

There is no such thing in Scripture as a judgment of the saved and a judgment of the unsaved occurring together at the same time; nor is there any such thing in Scripture as the issue of one’s eternal salvation or eternal damnation being brought up at any future judgment. Judgment in this respect, for both the saved and the unsaved, *occurred in past time*; and this past judgment can *never* be bought up as an issue again.

All future judgments will be based strictly upon *the works of those being judged, which renders it impossible for issues surrounding eternal verities to ever enter into these judgments*. Relative to the saved, judgment has already occurred, based on *their belief* and *Christ’s finished work*; relative to the unsaved, judgment, as well, has already occurred, based on *their unbelief* and *Christ’s finished work*:

*He that believes on Him is not condemned* [‘judged’]: *but he that believes not is condemned already* [‘has already been judged’], *because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*. ([John 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.18&t=NKJV))

(For additional information on the past judgment of both the saved and the unsaved, as seen in [John 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.18&t=NKJV), refer to the Foreword in this book.)

The Book of Life contains records that have been *lived*, and the blotting of a Christian’s name out of this book *follows* his judgment on the basis of that which has been recorded in the book and involves *millennial verities alone*. Such a Christian will be shown, on the basis of his own works (works burned at the judgment seat), to have been overcome; and he will suffer loss — the loss of his soul/life. Rather than his name being left intact, it will be blotted out of the book of life; and he will be among those denied a position of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom.

And the converse of the preceding will, as well, be true for the faithful Christian shown, in that future day, to have overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. His name will be retained in the Book of Life, and he will be among those occupying positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom.

Confession or Denial

Christ, in [Revelation 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV), has extended a twofold promise concerning the name of the properly-clothed overcomer in Sardis (“clothed in a white garment”) in that coming day:

1) “*I will not* [Greek: double negative, ‘I most certainly will not’] *blot out his name out of the Book of Life*.”

2) “*I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels*.”

This will occur in heaven *following* issues of the judgment seat, for the person whose name is to be confessed must first be shown to have overcome by the record contained in the book of life (and possibly other books as well).

Christ referred to this future event (along with the negative aspect [*denial of a confession of his name, resulting from his name having been blotted out of the Book of Life*]) on at least two occasions during His earthly ministry ([Matthew 10:32-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.32-33&t=NKJV); [Luke 12:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+12.8-9&t=NKJV)). The verses in Matthew refer *to confession or denial before “My Father who is in heaven,”* and the verses in Luke refer *to confession* or *denial* before “*the angels of God*.” The thought of one’s name having previously been blotted out of the book of life is not seen in these passages from the two gospel accounts, though it is seen when Scripture is compared with Scripture (these two passages compared with the message to the Church in Sardis).

Further, in the book of Matthew, this matter appears in a context referring to the salvation or loss of one’s soul ([Matthew 10:38-39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+10.38-39&t=NKJV); cf. [Matthew 16:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.24-27&t=NKJV)). Thus, this places the entire matter, as in [Revelation 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV), in connection with events surrounding findings and determinations at the judgment seat.

Paul, in his second epistle to Timothy, calls attention to the same thing ([2 Timothy 2:10-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.10-13&t=NKJV)); and the contextual setting has to do with *a future salvation, the glory of Christ, and the coming reign of Christ*:

*Therefore I endure* [patiently endure] *all things for the elect’s sake, that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal* [age-lasting] *glory.*

*It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him.*

*If we suffer* [patiently endure (same word in the Greek text as in v. 10)], *we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us.*

*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.* ([2 Timothy 2:10-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.10-13&t=NKJV))

Note that verse thirteen refers to the fact that Christ cannot accept as faithful an individual who has proven to be unfaithful. To do so would be to deny His own character, whether seen through statements in the written Word or actions of the living Word.

And the converse of that could only be true as well. Christ can only accept as faithful an individual who has proven himself to be faithful. Again, to do otherwise would be to deny His own character, whether seen through statements in the written Word or actions of the living Word.

*Christ must remain faithful to do exactly what He has said that He would do concerning confession or denial of Christians before His Father and before His Father’s angels.*

Thus, the parallel Scriptures to the confession of one’s name before the Father and before His angels, as revealed in [Revelation 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.5&t=NKJV), have to do with *confessing Christ before men and patiently enduring*. And it is within these two realms that the entire matter is set forth.

*Confessing Christ before men* has nothing to do with a public confession of one’s faith in Christ at the point of salvation, as is often taught; but such a confession is for those who are *already saved*, and this confession will be a natural outworking in the life of one exercising faithfulness to his calling. Confession or denial of Christians by Christ *in heaven*, during that coming day, is conditioned upon their overcoming or being overcome and has the coming Messianic Era in view.

And confession or denial of Christ by Christians *here upon the earth*, during the present time, should be looked upon as having the same end in view. There is a life to be lived, and the unfolding of this life under the leadership of the Lord should bring praise, honor, and glory to the Lord, as the individual looks out ahead toward events at the judgment seat and the reign of Christ that follows.

*Patiently enduring*, within its context in [2 Timothy 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.12&t=NKJV) must be understood in the light of Paul’s patient endurance in verse ten. He *patiently endured all things for the sake of other Christians in order that they might obtain the salvation having to do with age-lasting glory, ultimately occupying a position with Christ in the kingdom*.

The record of Paul’s life (now recorded in the Book of Life, awaiting the opening of this book at the judgment seat) *was one of concern for others, with the coming kingdom of Christ in view*. For the sake of other Christians, Paul let nothing stand in his way.

And Christians today are to govern their lives in a comparable manner, with the same end in view, as they too *patiently endure all things.*

Concluding Thoughts:

Decisions and determinations concerning *receiving rewards* or *suffering loss* will emanate out of issues surrounding the judgment seat, and the realization of these decisions and determinations will be brought to pass in “t*he kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ*.”

God has offered *rewards* for faithfulness; and Christians are exhorted to “*strive* [Greek: *agonizomai*, from which the English word “agonize” is derived, *i.e*., ‘exert every possible effort’]” in the present race of the faith, with rewards in view, while moving toward the goal of their calling (*cf*. [Luke 13:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+13.24&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 9:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.25&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV)). Rewards are *offered as compensations in order to encourage Christians as they are being tested and tried while engaged in the Lord’s business during the time of their present pilgrim journey*. And compensations of this nature are not to be taken lightly. Disdaining, ignoring, or neglecting proffered *rewards is completely out of line with any Scriptural presentation of this subject.*

The mother of James and John possessed godly aspirations for her two sons concerning future rewards, James and John themselves possessed the same aspirations, the other disciples in like manner possessed such aspirations, and Christians are exhorted to also possess aspirations of this nature ([Matthew 19:27-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+19.27-30&t=NKJV); [20:20-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+20.20-28&t=NKJV); [Mark 10:35-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+10.35-45&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-27&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 1:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.17-18&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 6:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.11-12&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 4:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.7-8&t=NKJV); [Titus 2:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+2.12-13&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 1:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.10-11&t=NKJV)).

A day is coming in the near future when every Christian will be called to an accounting. *Lives lived* will be reviewed from the records that the righteous Judge will have on hand. When the books containing records of *the deeds/works* of Christians are opened, there will be a *just recompense* on the basis of that which is revealed. Every Christian will be judged *solely* on the basis of the things written in these books, and the entire matter will be carried out in *an equitable, just manner*. *Receiving rewards* or *suffering loss* will, in each instance, be *commensurate with revealed works*. There will be *no exceptions*.

The Christians’ *deeds/works*, emanating from faithfulness or unfaithfulness, will come under scrutiny by and through being subjected to fire. Some works will be revealed as comparable to “*gold, silver, precious stones*” and endure the fire; other works will be revealed as comparable to “*wood, hay, straw*” and be consumed by the fire.

Christians with works enduring the fire will *receive rewards* and *positions* in the kingdom; Christians with works consumed by the fire will *suffer loss* and be *denied positions* in the kingdom.

Such will be the outcome of the judgment of *all* Christians at the end of this dispensation, preceding the Messianic Era.

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Chapter 10

**A Pillar, A City**

*He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name*. ([Revelation 3:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.12&t=NKJV))

If the message to the church in Philadelphia is to be looked upon as referring to a particular period in Church history, it could only be placed during a time which began in the nineteenth century and extended to the end of the dispensation. Then, the succeeding message to the church in Laodicea would cover the same time as well.

Both messages form continuations of two segments of Christendom referred to in the message to the preceding church, the church in Sardis (those with undefiled garments, and those with a name that they lived but were dead). The message to the church in Philadelphia constitutes a continuation of the former segment (those with undefiled garments); and the message to the church in Laodicea constitutes a continuation of the latter segment (those with a name that they lived but were dead), with both extending to the end of the dispensation.

But, as evident from Scriptures such as [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV) and [Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV), along with the arrangement of the seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three, that segment of Christendom represented by the church in Philadelphia could only continue in *a diminishing manner*. This segment of Christendom *could only progressively be engulfed by that segment of Christendom represented by the church in Laodicea.*

The status of *Christians alone* is in view in the messages to the seven churches; and the condition in which Christians find themselves, as viewed in these messages, is always brought about by *works*. In this respect, the reference to a condition described by the word “*dead*” could only refer to *a spiritually destitute condition* brought about by the absence of acceptable works, which in [James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV) is associated with *a dead faith*.

Such individuals in the church in Sardis must be looked upon in an opposite sense to those in the same church who had not defiled their garments. Thus, the word “*dead*” could be equated with *defiled*; and in the message to the church in Laodicea, the same condition is described another way by the word *naked* ([Revelation 3:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.17-18&t=NKJV)).

The “*white garments*” are also in view in the message to the church in Laodicea (as in the message to the church in Sardis); and those described as “*naked*” were said to be in a position wherein they would have been able to array themselves in “*white garments*” through works (as were their counterparts in Sardis), a position that could never be held by an unsaved person because of his alienated position outside Christ ([Revelation 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.15&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.18&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Revelation 19:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.7-8&t=NKJV)).

The church in Philadelphia is mentioned first, calling attention to *an open door* set before those who had exercised *patient endurance* through the trials and testing of this life (“*patience*” [[Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV)] should be translated “patient endurance”). The full fruition of the work of the reformers and those who followed in their steps appears to be in view in the message to the church in Philadelphia; and such a fruition could refer only to the condition in which the Church, for the first time following the Reformation, found itself during the nineteenth century.

Two things marked the activities of Christians during those days:

1) Worldwide missionary activity, paralleled only by the missionary activity of Christians during the first century of the Church’s existence.

2) A restoration of the great truths surrounding Christ’s return, seen in the first-century Church.

If matters are viewed in this respect, *the open door* may relate to the former and *the patient endurance* to the latter.

(See Chapter 9 for comments concerning the association of “patient endurance” on the part of Christians with events surrounding Christ’s return.)

*The planting* and *watering* would have been carried on by the sixteenth century reformers and those who followed in their steps during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; but the forthcoming *increase* that God would give awaited the Church during the nineteenth century (*cf*. [1 Corinthians 3:5-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.5-7&t=NKJV)). Missionary endeavor became a major activity of the Church in the sixteenth century, and there was a beginning of the restoration of prophetic truth during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; but the full fruition of the entire matter was not seen until the nineteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, God raised-up great missionary-minded individuals who entered into the labors of the reformers and those following in their steps, taking advantage of open doors in countries worldwide; and during this same time, God raised-up great prophetic students who built upon the work of their seventeenth and eighteenth century predecessors.

God continued to raise-up great missionary-minded individuals and great prophetic students for over one hundred years, extending well into the twentieth century. But then events took a different course. Mission doors around the world began to close, and, correspondingly, the ranks of the great teachers of prophecy began to diminish. In this respect, there is an apparent connection between the Church being allowed to involve itself in great missionary activity and the ministry of the prophetic word. Such a connection existed at the beginning of the dispensation, and such also existed near the end of the dispensation.

The terminus of the matter though has, for the past few decades, been rapidly moving more and more away from that sphere of activity typified by the Philadelphian church and moving more and more toward that sphere of activity typified by the Laodicean church. The deteriorating effect produced by the leaven that the woman placed in the three measures of meal in [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV) could only cause the Laodicean church to become more and more prominent until, for all practical purposes, *that which is seen in this church alone would prevail as the dispensation was brought to a close.*

The Hour of Trial

*Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial that shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.* ([Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV))

The words “*hour of trial* [KJV: ‘temptation’]” in [Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV) are taken by most Bible students to be a reference to the coming time of *Tribulation*, with the promise being given in the message to the church in Philadelphia that Christians will not enter into this time. The word, “*from*” is a translation of the Greek word “*ek*,” meaning “out of.” Thus, the correct translation is, “I also will keep you *out of* the hour of trial . . . .”

And many Bible students, seeing the “*hour of trial*” as a reference to the coming Tribulation period, see this verse as a promise that Christians will be kept *out of this time, out of the Tribulation*. That is, they see this verse as a promise to Christians that they will be removed from the earth before the Tribulation begins.

In turn, this has also led many Bible students to follow a selective rapture ideology, for all Christians are not included in this promise. Note that only those who have *kept My command to persevere* have been promised that they will be kept “*out of the hour of trial* . . . .”

Thus, if this verse centers on a promise that Christians will be removed before the coming Tribulation, then a major problem exists, for a teaching of this nature would be in direct conflict with that which Scripture reveals concerning the rapture. Scripture is quite clear from both the Old Testament types and the New Testament antitype that the rapture will be *all-inclusive. All Christians will be removed at this time, not just those who have kept the word of His patience*.

The Tribulation comprises the last seven years of Daniel’s prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. And, accordingly, this period of time has to do with seven years that will complete God’s dealings with Israel during the preceding dispensation.

This preceding dispensation was interrupted seven years short of completion. Israel’s sin had reached an apex (at Calvary); and God stepped in, stopped the chronometer marking off time for the dispensation, and instituted a new dispensation. Israel was set aside, and fifty-three days following the events surrounding Calvary, God sent His Spirit into the world to procure a bride for His Son. God, at this time, through events beginning on the day of Pentecost, called into existence *one new man* that was neither Jew nor Gentile; and the Spirit began His search for the bride among those comprising this *new man*, a search that would last for one dispensation, for 2,000 years.

Once the Spirit has completed His search, this *new man* (comprised of all Christians) will be removed and dealt with at Christ’s judgment seat in the heavens. Then, once this has been accomplished, God will turn back to Israel and complete His dealings with this nation during Man’s Day, completing the last seven years of the previous dispensation.

This will complete Man’s 6,000-year Day. Christ will then return, restore Israel, overthrow Gentile world power, and the 1,000-year Messianic Era will be ushered in.

[Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV) really has nothing to do with either the rapture or the Tribulation. Both are dealt with in the book of Revelation, showing a pre-Tribulation rapture of all Christians. But neither the rapture nor the Tribulation is dealt with in this verse. The rapture is dealt with in [Revelation 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.10&t=NKJV); [4:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-2&t=NKJV)a, and the Tribulation is dealt with in [Revelation 6-19a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6-19a&t=NKJV). But [Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV), understood within context, can clearly be seen to deal with something else entirely.

[Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV), within context, has to do with *works emanating out of faithfulness* (*cf*. [James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV)), *with a view to overcoming* (*cf*. [Revelation 3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.8&t=NKJV), [10a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10a&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.12&t=NKJV)). And the Christians in Philadelphia were promised that, because of their faithfulness, they would be kept out of a particular time of testing/trials — “*that shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth*.”

This promised *deliverance* could only be the same as that which is seen in what is commonly called “the Lord’s prayer” in [Matthew 6:9-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+6.9-13&t=NKJV): “*And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one* [Satan] . . .” ([Matthew 6:13a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+6.13a&t=NKJV)). This would be the same temptation that Christ spoke of in [Mark 14:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+14.38&t=NKJV) and that Paul wrote about in [1 Corinthians 7:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+7.5&t=NKJV). And it is the same temptation from which the Lord promised *deliverance* in [2 Peter 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+2.9&t=NKJV).

Tests or trials are seen in Scripture within two spheres. They are seen as something that God uses in connection with the maturing process, with a view to *the person ultimately being approved at the judgment seat* ([James 1:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.2-4&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV)); and they are seen as something that *Satan uses in his efforts to bring about defeat in a Christian’s life* ([Mark 14:38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+14.38&t=NKJV); [James 1:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.13-15&t=NKJV)). The promise concerning *deliverance* in [Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV) would have to be understood within the latter frame of reference, in keeping with Christ’s statement to His disciples in [Matthew 6:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+6.13&t=NKJV).

This “trial [testing]” by Satan *was about to* (literal rendering from the Greek text) come upon “*the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth*.” The fact that this testing would be worldwide is another thing that has led many individuals to believe that the coming Tribulation was in view. But, not so. *Christians* are being dealt with, not the world at large; and the expression, “*the whole world*,” must be understood in the same sense as it is used in [Colossians 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.6&t=NKJV), where *Christians alone* are also in view.

In [Colossians 1:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.5-6&t=NKJV), [23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.23&t=NKJV), Paul states that the gospel (his gospel, the good news surrounding the mystery that had been revealed to him) had been proclaimed throughout “*all the world*,” “*to every creature under heaven.*” However, the message in this gospel, in Paul’s gospel — “*if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel*” ([Colossians 1:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.23&t=NKJV)) — was for *Christians alone*. The content of the message restricts this good news to Christians, allowing for only one understanding of the passage. To “*every creature under heaven*” can only be a reference to Christians (all Christians) scattered throughout the then known world, not to unsaved individuals in the world as well.

And the extent of the promise surrounding deliverance from a coming time of testing/trials in [Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV) is the same. It is a promise made *to faithful Christians* relative to a time of testing/trials that Satan would bring upon Christians (all Christians) scattered throughout the then known world, *seeking to bring about their defeat*. They, because of their faithfulness, would overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. And, by and through this means, they would be delivered out of the onslaughts of Satan, as seen in [Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV).

And the context of this verse is *in complete keeping* with this thought, not with thoughts surrounding the rapture. Efforts to use [Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV) as a verse relating to the rapture can only have *one end result,* *which is negative*. Such efforts can only serve *to do away with that which actually is dealt with in this verse — a facet of teaching surrounding the Word of the Kingdom*.

There is an abundance of Scripture — in both the Old Testament and the New Testament — to show that the complete Church will be removed prior to the Tribulation. And, with this in mind, one need not attempt to make [Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV) deal with something that it doesn’t deal with, in an effort to teach that which is clearly taught so many places elsewhere in Scripture, even elsewhere in the book of Revelation itself.

Behold, I Come Quickly

*Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown*. ([Revelation 3:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.11&t=NKJV))

The Greek word translated “*quickly*” (*tachu*) is used six times in the book of Revelation referring to the coming of the Lord for His saints ([Revelation 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.5&t=NKJV), [16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.16&t=NKJV); [3:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.11&t=NKJV); [22:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.7&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.12&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.20&t=NKJV)). This word, within its context in these passages, can only refer to *the suddenness* or *swiftness* of an event coming at a completely *unexpected time* for many, though others will be *watching and waiting*.

This would be a continuation of thought from the previous verse relative to *patient endurance under trials and testing*. Individuals are exhorted to hold onto *that which they have*, for a revealed reason that both precedes and follows the exhortation. *That which they have*, contextually, can only have to do with *the end result of patient endurance* ([Revelation 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.10&t=NKJV)) — *occupying a regal position with Christ in His kingdom* ([Revelation 2:11b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11b&t=NKJV)).

That which is in view in [Revelation 3:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.11&t=NKJV) has to do with *the sudden, swift* nature of the Lord’s return. This is a parallel passage to that which is seen in [1 Thessalonians 5:1-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+5.1-9&t=NKJV). Some Christians will be watching and some will not be watching when the Lord returns in this manner. Some will have patiently endured, holding fast that which they had. Others though will not have done so. And the end result will have to do with either occupying or being denied a position with Christ in the kingdom.

*The suddenness* or *swiftness* of Christ’s return is described in [1 Corinthians 15:52](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.52&t=NKJV) by the use of the Greek word *atomos*, translated “*moment*.” (Our English word “atom” is simply a transliterated form of *atomos*.) When associated with *time*, as in [1 Corinthians 15:52](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.52&t=NKJV), this word refers to the smallest, most minute unit into which time can be divided (*e.g*., hours are divided into minutes, minutes are divided into seconds, and seconds are divided into fractions such as a millisecond [one-thousandth of a second], or a microsecond [one-millionth of a second]). And there are divisions beyond a microsecond.

Events surrounding Christ’s return for His saints will occur within the scope of a unit of time lasting less than a microsecond — so *sudden* and *swift* that it will be beyond all finite comprehension. And the warning to Christians concerning *the unexpected nature* of this event occurs numerous places in Scripture (*cf*. [Matthew 24:45-51](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.45-51&t=NKJV); [25:10-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.10-13&t=NKJV), [24-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.24-30&t=NKJV); [Luke 12:42-46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+12.42-46&t=NKJV); [13:24-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+13.24-30&t=NKJV); [19:20-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.20-26&t=NKJV)).

Christians being removed from this world (removed from Man’s Day on earth and placed in the Lord’s Day in heaven) is really not the main thrust of the matter though. Interpreters have too often sought to make it so. The main thrust of the matter has to do with the Christians’ present manner of living (*patient endurance*) in view of the sudden, unexpected nature of the Lord’s return (*Behold, I come quickly* [suddenly, swiftly]) and that which will be brought to light following His return (*that no one may take your crown*).

Christians, in actuality, will be removed from the earth preceding a judgment befalling the earth-dwellers, with a view to their appearance before the judgment seat of Christ in the heavens; and it is at this judgment that all decisions and determinations concerning *the presently proffered crowns* will be made. [Revelation 3:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.11&t=NKJV) anticipates these events at the judgment seat following the removal of Christians from the earth. And [Revelation 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.10&t=NKJV), leading into verse eleven, deals, not with the rapture, but with the same subject matter seen in verse eleven, providing introductory material for this verse.

“Crowns” have to do with *regal power and authority*. Rulers are the ones who wear crowns, and crowns are presently being offered to Christians in view of their occupying positions as co-heirs with Christ in His kingdom. Christ will wear a crown in that day, and all who rule with Christ will likewise wear crowns. There will be no such thing as an uncrowned Christian occupying a position as co-heir with Christ during the day of His power. *These positions of power and authority are real, the proffered crowns are real, and the warnings concerning the possibility of a forfeiture of these crowns are just as real.*

The Overcomers

Thoughts from verses ten and eleven concerning faithfulness in view of the Lord’s return, the judgment seat, and the reign of Christ lead directly into the overcomer’s promise in verse twelve. This promise has several interrelated parts and brings matters introduced in the preceding verses to their climax. Those who *patiently endure* (persevere) during the present time will be shown (by and through the issues of the judgment seat) to have overcome, they will receive crowns, and they will occupy positions as co-heirs with Christ in His kingdom.

The overcomer’s promise to the church in Philadelphia describes certain things about the nature of these positions; and, for the only time in the overcomer’s promises, reference is made to the city from which Christians will conduct this rule.

1) Pillars in the Temple

The promise to the overcomer in Philadelphia that he will be made a “*pillar in the temple*” is, of course, a figure of speech. “Christ” is *the temple* in one respect ([Revelation 21:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.22&t=NKJV)); and in another respect, Christ is presently building a temple. The temple presently under construction is being built with “*living stones* [Christians, who themselves are temples (temples of the Holy Spirit)]” ([1 Peter 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.5&t=NKJV); cf. [Matthew 16:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.18&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 3:16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.16-17&t=NKJV); [6:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+6.19&t=NKJV)).

The figurative use of “*pillar*” in [Revelation 3:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.12&t=NKJV) must, for the spiritual lessons being drawn, refer back to that which is literal; and for these spiritual lessons it seems apparent that the reference can only be to “Solomon’s temple,” where special, specific reference is made to *pillars* in the temple.

(The only other temple built during Old Testament days was “Zerubbabel’s temple,” built following the Babylonian captivity. Centuries later, following a reconstructing process, beginning under Herod the Great, this temple became known as “Herod’s temple”; and this is the temple that was destroyed in 70 A.D.

The grandeur of Solomon’s temple so far overshadowed the grandeur of Zerubbabel’s temple that the latter was looked upon as “nothing” in comparison to the former [[Haggai 2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Haggai+2.3&t=NKJV)].)

The son of David, Solomon, built a temple for the Lord; and the greater Son of David, Christ, is presently building a temple. Revelation concerning the construction of the former has been given in such a manner that great spiritual truths can be drawn pertaining to the construction of the latter. The prophets recorded far more than just Jewish history. Their writings, recorded under the supernatural direction of the Holy Spirit, are filled with significance and meaning.

When Solomon built the temple following his ascension to the throne, he had a worker of brass from Tyre construct two massive pillars for the porch. Solomon named one of these pillars “Jachin,” meaning *establish*; and he named the other pillar “Boaz,” meaning *strength* ([1 Kings 7:13-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+7.13-21&t=NKJV)).

The overcomers in Philadelphia were promised future positions with Christ that appear to be described by the meanings of the names given to the two pillars in Solomon’s temple. The promise to the overcomers that they would “*go no more out*” refers to their fixed position as pillars in the temple; and with the two massive pillars in Solomon’s temple in view, saying that overcoming Christians will be placed in the position of pillars in the temple is saying that these Christians will occupy *sure, secure, firmly established* positions of *strength* and *power*. And positions of this nature, in complete accordance with [Revelation 3:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.12&t=NKJV), will be realized when they rule and reign as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.

The manner in which Christians will conduct themselves during that coming day should be thought of in the same sense as the manner in which Christ will conduct Himself. In the words of the psalmist, Christ, during His rule over the nations, will “*break them with a rod of iron*” and “*dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel*” ([Psalm 2:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.8-9&t=NKJV)); and in the overcomer’s promise to the church in Thyatira, Christians are promised that their coming rule will be conducted after the same fashion:

*And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations —*

*He* [the overcoming Christian] *shall rule them* [the nations] *with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels — as I also have received from My Father*. ([Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV))

The position that Christians are to occupy today is, in many respects, diametrically opposed to the position that Christians are to occupy during the coming age. [Matthew 5:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+5.5&t=NKJV) states, “*Blessed are the meek* [present]: *for they shall inherit the earth* [future].”

The word “*meek*” refers to one’s present manner of living, in view of a future inheritance. This word has to do with being “gentle,” “humble,” or “unassuming” as one patiently endures the trials and testing of life.

The same word is used in [Matthew 21:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.5&t=NKJV) relative to Christ at the time He rode into Jerusalem as Israel’s King, anticipating His rejection and crucifixion:

*Tell the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly* [meek]*, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

This verse is a fulfillment of [Zechariah 9:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zechariah+9.9&t=NKJV), where the word “lowly” is used in the translation rather than “meek.”

“Lowly” is the translation of a Hebrew word meaning *poor* or *afflicted*, and this word refers to the position Christ assumed on our behalf. He who was rich became poor that we, *through Him*, might be made rich ([2 Corinthians 8:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+8.9&t=NKJV)). The sufferings of [Isaiah 53](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+53&t=NKJV) are in view, but these sufferings do not stand alone; the glory *must* follow the sufferings, as the day follows the night ([Luke 24:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.26&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 12:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.2&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 3:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+3.13&t=NKJV)).

When Christ was upon earth the first time, appearing to Israel as *the meek* or *lowly* One, He allowed the governing Gentile power of that day to array Him as a mock King. He was clothed in purple, crowned with a wreath made from thorns, and given a reed for a scepter. He was then mocked, spat upon, and smitten ([Matthew 27:27-31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.27-31&t=NKJV)). He, the One destined to break the nations with *a rod of iron*, allowed this to happen. Why? Simply because it was not time for Him to take the scepter.

This occurred during the time of His sufferings and humiliation, which was during the Times of the Gentiles (the interval during which Gentile nations hold the scepter); and *not only must events surrounding His sufferings and humiliation* (past) *be fulfilled, but the Times of the Gentiles* (presently continuing) *must be fulfilled as well before Christ can come into His glory.*

Christ remained in a completely “unassuming, gentle, humble” state while being persecuted unjustly at the time of His first coming. However, the day is coming when He will return and be seen by the world after an entirely different fashion. He will then be seated upon a “*white horse*” rather than an “*ass*,” and He will come forth to “*judge and make war*” ([Revelation 19:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11ff&t=NKJV)). The words “meek” or “lowly” will not fit His character at all in that day, for *He will take the scepter and break the nations* (*cf*. [Daniel 2:34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.34&t=NKJV), [35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.35&t=NKJV), [44-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.44-45&t=NKJV)).

In this light, Christians, as *partakers* with Christ ([1 Peter 4:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.12-13&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Romans 8:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.17&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.12&t=NKJV)), are to conduct their affairs (both present and future) after the same manner in which Christ conducted and will conduct His affairs (both past and future).

The government of the earth, continuing under Gentile dominion, is no more the Christians’ concern during the present time than it was Christ’s concern when He was upon earth almost two millennia ago. Christians are *not* to hold the scepter today.

Rather, they are to assume the same position relative to world government that Christ assumed. They are to patiently endure the trials and testing of life in an “unassuming, humble, gentle” spirit; and if called upon to so do, they are to continue in this manner through any unjust treatment that God may allow to befall His people, *looking forward to another day — the day when Christians, with Christ, will hold the scepter and break the nations.*

2) Engravings on the Pillars

Christ returning to the earth at the termination of the Tribulation, as the conquering King, will put down all power and authority. He will have “*on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*”; and He will possess a “*new name*” that no man will know ([Revelation 3:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.12&t=NKJV); [19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV), [16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.16&t=NKJV)).

In the ancient world, the columns of cities were often inscribed with the names of conquerors, and this appears to be the thought in [Revelation 3:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.12&t=NKJV). Christ will inscribe upon the pillars of the temple (upon overcoming [conquering] Christians) three things:

1) “*the name of My God*,”

2) “*the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem,*”

3) “*My new name*.”

This will be brought to pass after Christ puts down all present ruling powers/authorities and assumes, with His co-heirs, governmental control over the earth.

At that time Christians will be intimately identified, after the fashion revealed in [Revelation 3:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.12&t=NKJV), with *God the Father, God the Son*, and *the New Jerusalem*. And they will then exercise *sure, secure, firmly established* positions of *strength* and *power* as they rule with the Son from the New Jerusalem.

It seems apparent that the New Jerusalem will be a satellite city of the earth during the coming age. Overcoming Christians, along with a select group of Old Testament and Tribulation saints (those who qualified to rule from the heavens), will dwell in this city. This, however, is only for the coming age. Once the new heavens and the new earth have been brought into existence ([Revelation 21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21&t=NKJV); [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22&t=NKJV)), the New Jerusalem will apparently rest upon the new earth and so remain throughout the ages of eternity. During these ages, the New Jerusalem will continue to be the dwelling place of a segment of the redeemed and continue as the center of governmental power and authority.

The New Jerusalem is described in [Revelation 21:9-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.9-21&t=NKJV), with additional information concerning the city and its inhabitants given in the verses following ([Revelation 21:22-22:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.22-22.21&t=NKJV)). This city measures about fifteen hundred miles in length, in breadth, and in height; it is constructed of “*pure gold, like clear glass*”; and a wall over two hundred feet high, constructed of “*jasper*” (with “*twelve gates*” constructed of “*twelve pearls,*” resting on foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones), surrounds the city. Certain things are also stated concerning the “street” of the city, the “temple” in the city, the “light” for the city, the “tree of life,” and a “pure river of water of life.”

The fact that the length, breadth, and height of the New Jerusalem are equal should not lead one to conclude that the city has been constructed in the shape of a cube, with possibly numerous tiers or levels to the city within the cube. No geometric shape is given in Scripture; and it would seem to be more in keeping with that which is revealed to think of the New Jerusalem in the same sense as walled cities in the Middle East down through history, with one exception — an elevated central point (elevated to equal the length or breadth), probably housing the center of government. Many things seem to fit much better by viewing the city after this fashion (e.g. the wall surrounding the city, the gates to the city, the street in the city, and the river flowing out from the throne of God, appear to depict the city built on a single level [[Revelation 21:17-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.17-21&t=NKJV); [22:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.1-2&t=NKJV)]).

Another thing that should be understood about the New Jerusalem is the fact that this city was brought into existence either prior to or during the days of Abraham ([Hebrews 11:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.16&t=NKJV)) and has, since that time, been associated with *Abraham and his seed*. The seed of Abraham in the Old Testament, to whom heavenly promises and blessings pertained, were the lineal descendants of Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob’s twelve sons. The seed of Abraham, to whom these same heavenly promises and blessings pertain today, are Christians ([Galatians 3:16-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.16-18&t=NKJV), [26-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.26-29&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Genesis 22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV); [Matthew 21:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.43&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 2:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.9-10&t=NKJV)). In reality though, Abraham and a segment of his seed from both dispensations will ultimately enter into the proffered heavenly promises and blessings.

(Though the kingdom of the heavens was taken from Israel and is presently being offered to a new nation — *the one new man “in Christ,”* comprised of Christians [*cf*. [Matthew 21:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.43&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 2:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.9-10&t=NKJV)] — certain Old Testament saints aspired to and qualified to occupy heavenly positions in the theocracy prior to that time when the kingdom was taken from Israel.

And the nation of Israel, forfeiting the right to rule from heavenly places in later years, cannot do away with the promises made to these Old Testament saints. Regardless of that which the nation did at Christ’s first coming, these Old Testament saints will realize that which has been promised to them.)

The “place” presently being prepared for Christians in [John 14:2-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+14.2-3&t=NKJV) has nothing to do with a supposed present construction of the New Jerusalem. In the “*Father’s house are many mansions* [*lit*. abiding places],” and Christ has gone into heaven to “*prepare a place*” for Christians *in the Father’s house*. The New Jerusalem is a city *in* the Father’s house, *not* the Father’s house. His “house” includes *all under His sovereign control*, and in the broadest sense of the word would include the entire universe. However, biblical Revelation concerns itself with *this earth*; and Christ going away “*to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return*” relates itself to *governmental control over the earth.*

The “place” that Christ has gone away to prepare for Christians is *a position* with Him in this kingdom. Overcoming Christians in that coming day will *dwell* in the New Jerusalem and occupy their *place* with Christ upon His throne, in complete accordance with that which is revealed in the overcomer’s promise in [Revelation 3:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.12&t=NKJV).

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Chapter 11

**Seated on the Throne**

*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne.* ([Revelation 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV))

The first thing that a person *must* get fixed in his mind when studying the message to the church in Laodicea is the fact that the Spirit of God is addressing Christians. The unsaved are not in view at all; they cannot be in view. The message is to a *church* ([Revelation 3:14-22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.14-22&t=NKJV)), and the New Testament knows nothing about unsaved people having a part in the formation of a church.

*Works*, with a view to overcoming or being overcome, are seen throughout the passage. And, with spiritual values involved, this is a realm into which the unsaved cannot enter.

Thus it is with the structure of each of the other six messages to the six churches preceding the message to the church in Laodicea. In this respect, the church in Laodicea is no different than the church in Philadelphia, or any of the other churches. *All* seven messages are to Christians, to those “*in Christ”*; and all have to do with *works*, resulting in Christians overcoming or being overcome.

Too many people deal with certain problems that arise in the Christian life in a rather loose manner. When, for example, sin manifests itself in the life of an individual claiming to be a Christian, one of the most common ways that other Christians often deal with the matter is to begin questioning the person’s salvation.

The thought usually centers on the premise that if a person is saved he will follow a certain course of action; and if he doesn’t follow this course of action, his conduct reveals that he was never really saved in the first place.

This type of thinking though is *completely contrary* to any Scriptural teaching on salvation by grace through faith. It is *a corruption* of the pure gospel of the grace of God, for works have been introduced into a realm where works cannot exist (*cf*. [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-9&t=NKJV); [Romans 11:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.6&t=NKJV)).

A person can no more show by his works (any type of actions on his part) that he has been saved than he can perform works to be saved in the first place. *Works cannot enter after any fashion*, either preceding or following the time one is saved.

*A person cannot perform works to be saved.*

*A person cannot perform works to stay saved.*

*And a person cannot perform works to show that he has been saved.*

Salvation is *by grace through faith* apart from works, and it must forever so remain. As in [Jonah 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jonah+2.9&t=NKJV), “*Salvation is of the Lord*” (*cf*. [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-9&t=NKJV); [Titus 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+3.5&t=NKJV)).

The church in Laodicea is described as “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*.” This description applies to a group of “lukewarm” Christians, “rich” in the things of the world that Christ is about to “*vomit*” out of His “*mouth*” ([Revelation 3:15-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.15-17&t=NKJV)). The scene within that portion of Christendom depicted by the church in Laodicea, in this respect, is one portrayed as producing sickness to the very stomach.

These Christians had been called into existence with the things of the coming age in view; but they, instead, prostituted their high calling through their intimate association with the things of this present age, the present world system under Satan. And it is the One who made this calling possible, by and through His sacrifice on Calvary, who is associated with sickness in the respect that it is set forth in this passage.

Being vomited out of the stomach has no reference to eternal verities, for such are not in view. The message is to those who already possess eternal life, and it is *life for the coming age alone* that is in view.

The scene in these verses anticipates the judgment seat of Christ, with Christians standing *naked* and *ashamed* in the presence of Christ ([Revelation 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.18&t=NKJV)). Such Christians will be rejected for positions with Christ on the throne, with the attitude that Christ exhibits toward their revealed works expressed in very vivid language.

However, there is another side to the picture presented in these verses. Despite the attitude of such Christians as set forth in the message to the church in Laodicea, Christ still extends an invitation for them to “repent.” They have forsaken Him, but He has not forsaken them.

Christ still holds out before them proffered crowns, necessary for positions on the throne with Him in the coming day. It is not too late for them to buy “*gold tried in the fire*” (that they might be rich), clothe themselves in “*white garments*” (that the shame of their nakedness might not be manifested), and anoint their “*eyes with eye salve*” (that they might see).

Christ stands at the door of the lukewarm Church of today and knocks, as He stood at the door of the Laodicean church in Revelation chapter three after the same fashion; and the invitation is to the individual Christian within the Church — whether in the Laodicean church then, or the Laodicean Church of today — is the same:

. . *. if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him* [not come into that individual, but come inside the Church to that individual], *and will dine with him, and he with Me*. ([Revelation 3:20b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.20b&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Revelation 3:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.18-19&t=NKJV))

The End, Goal

The present dispensation will one day end, be brought to a close; and Scripture presents the Church at the termination of this dispensation in a dual fashion. The messages to the churches in Philadelphia and Laodicea present these two facets within Christendom, forming God’s own commentary concerning the concluding period of Church history, with the church in Laodicea becoming more and more prominent as the age nears its completion.

There will always be faithful Christians, extending right on up to the time of the rapture. God will always have a faithful remnant (*cf*. [1 Kings 19:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+19.14&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Kings+19.18&t=NKJV); [Revelation 11:3ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.3ff&t=NKJV)), a witness on earth, seen by the presence of the church in Philadelphia. But Christendom, by large — the Church as a whole, foreshadowed by the church in Laodicea — by and through an unholy alliance with the world, will, for all practical purposes, *stand alone* as the Church in the world at the end of the dispensation.

1) Beginning and Working of the Matter in History

As seen in previous chapters dealing with the seven churches in Asia during John’s day, there is an event in Church history that precipitated conditions as they exist today, almost two millennia later; and that event was t*he placing of leaven in the three measures of meal by the woman in* [*Matthew13:33*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthe+13.33&t=NKJV)*.* Once this act had been accomplished, which appears to have occurred very early in the history of the Church, the end of the matter was set. The leaven would work in the meal “*until the whole was leavened*,” and such would ultimately result in conditions existing in the Church at the conclusion of the dispensation that would parallel those existing in the first century church in Laodicea.

“Leaven” in Scripture has to do with that which is *evil, vile, corrupt*: the Israelites, immediately following the Passover, were told to “*put away leaven*” out of their houses ([Exodus 12:14-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+12.14-20&t=NKJV)); Jesus told His disciples to “*beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees*” ([Matthew 16:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.6&t=NKJV)); and Christians are told, “*Purge out therefore the old leaven*” ([1 Corinthians 5:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+5.7&t=NKJV)), with an allusion made in the following verse ([1 Corinthians 5:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+5.8&t=NKJV)) to the feast of unleavened bread in Exodus chapter twelve (showing a type-antitype arrangement of the teaching set forth).

The leaven that the woman placed in the three measures of meal in [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV) was destined to ultimately corrupt the entire mass. And this is exactly the climactic time we are nearing (or possibly already at) in Church history today. The *whole* is to be permeated by the working of the leaven, and the message to the church in Laodicea shows *the end result of the matter.*

Leaven actually works best in a place where the temperature is not too hot or too cold, and the lukewarm state of the Laodicean church points to ideal conditions after this fashion. The leaven, after many centuries of deteriorating work, will be brought into the advanced stages of its action and do its most damaging work within the lukewarm confines of the Laodicean Church near the end of the dispensation.

The working of this leaven will be so complete that the question is asked in [Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV), “. . . *when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith* [the faith] *on the earth?*” The response to the question, designated by the wording in the Greek text, is *negative*. The Son of Man *will not* find “the faith” upon the earth when He returns. Rather, He will find conditions as depicted in [Revelation 3:14ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.14ff&t=NKJV).

“The faith” in [Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV) can only be synonymous with *faith* exhibited by Christians in passages such as [1Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV) and [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV). It is a faith in connection with *laying hold on eternal life* [life for the age] in 1 Timothy and a faith in opposition to *the great apostasy of the latter days* in Jude. This is the faith destroyed by the working of the leaven within the lukewarm confines of the Laodicean church, producing the conditions described as “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*.”

This is the reason Christendom exists as it is seen today. The corruption brought about by the leaven, destroying “the faith,” has produced a condition in which the return of Christ is either not taught at all or it is invariably taught in such a way that things surrounding “the faith” are not dealt with.

(Christendom today, from a humanistic standpoint, can be seen in all types of stages, covering a wide panorama of differences.

For example, there are churches that are either exclusively homosexual or churches openly accepting homosexuals into their fellowship, both seeing homosexuality as simply an alternate lifestyle [in line with the world’s view]; then there are very liberal churches that bear little resemblance to that which Scripture teaches; there are more orthodox-type churches that are seemingly teaching correct biblical doctrine in a number of areas; there are churches that pride themselves on their fundamentalism, etc.

But there is one thing that, with rare exception, all of them have in common, revealing their true identity — as being *Laodicean*, not *Philadelphian*. None of them, with rare exception, *either know anything about or will have anything to do with the Word of the Kingdom, the central message of Scripture that the leaven has been centering its attack on for two millennia*. In fact, many of the churches that pride themselves on their fundamentalism, unlike many of the more liberal churches that are out of the mainstream of things in this respect, will often go out of their way *to fight teachings surrounding the Word of the Kingdom*.

And, because of the working of the leaven over two millennia of time, the preceding is perfectly understandable. The leaven knows no boundaries within Christendom, only one object — destroy any and all teaching surrounding the Word of the Kingdom.

True fundamentalism in Christianity would necessitate an adherence to the fundamentals of the Christian faith, which, of necessity, would have to center around the Word of the Kingdom. This is the way it was in Ephesus [the first of the seven churches in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)], *until they left their first love*. And this is the way it must be in any church today that would look upon itself as *Philadelphian* rather than *Laodicean* — which would be an adherence to or a return to that which is taught and believed in Ephesus, to true fundamentalism, *before the Church left its first love.*

Between these two points, *there is no middle ground.* *A person, or a complete church, is either for Christ or against Christ* [[Matthew 12:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+12.30&t=NKJV); [Luke 11:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+11.23&t=NKJV)]. A Church is either *Philadelphian* [centers its teaching on the Word of the Kingdom] or *Laodicean* [centers its teaching on other than the Word of the Kingdom]. And the latter, regardless of how fundamental they might appear to be, *are still Laodicean, not Philadelphian*.)

The very reason for the existence of Christians upon the earth *is inseparably linked to the coming kingdom*. Christians are the ones destined to occupy the throne with Christ; and this is the heart of that which has come under attack by and through the working of the leaven.

Every Christian is in line to inherit the rights of the firstborn, the rights of primogeniture; and these rights, in their entirety, have to do with positions in the coming kingdom. Everything moves toward that day when Christ will take the kingdom; and this appears to be something viewed in a somewhat similar respect by both *the world around us and by the worldly-minded Laodicean Christians in our midst.*

(“The world” though really doesn’t possess a spiritual capacity to understand the things surrounding that day when Christ takes the kingdom. All “the world” can know is *fact* concerning the matter, *i.e.*, that Christ one day will take the kingdom.

The worldly-minded Laodicean Christians, on the other hand, possess a capacity for spiritual truth. But the things surrounding that day when Christ takes the kingdom are of little to no interest to them. They know little more [often no more] about the matter than “the world” itself; and, generally, they would take a similar position to that taken by the world. They, as the world, are generally quite content with the status quo.)

2) Goal and Conclusion of the Matter in Prophecy

When the birth of the nation of Israel occurred in Egypt, followed by this nation being removed from Egypt, there was a purpose, a goal behind the matter. Israel, as *God’s firstborn son*, was to be removed from one land, be placed in another, and realize the rights of primogeniture in that land. Israel was to enter into the land of Canaan and rule over the Gentile nations of the earth. Not only was Israel to rule after this fashion, but Israel was also to be “*a kingdom of priests*” through whom all the Gentile nations would be blessed ([Genesis 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.3&t=NKJV); [Exodus 19:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.5-6&t=NKJV)).

Israel being placed in this position would bring about the fulfillment of one part of [Genesis 22:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17&t=NKJV) (*the earthly seed* of Abraham [“*the sand which is on the seashore*”] would “*possess the gate of their enemies* [rule over his enemies]”); and, by and through this means, [Genesis 22:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.18&t=NKJV) could be fulfilled insofar as the earthly aspect of the kingdom was concerned (“*And in your seed shall all the nations* [Gentiles] *of the earth be blessed*”).

(For the earthly aspect of the kingdom to be brought into full fruition though, the entirety of [Genesis 22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV) would have to be brought to pass. The heavenly aspect of the kingdom would have to be brought into existence as well.

The seed of Abraham would have to possess the gate of the enemy in both *heavenly* and *earthly* realms. The removal of Satan and his angels from the heavenly realm of the kingdom in the middle of the Tribulation and their being bound and cast into an abyss at the end of the Tribulation, an abyss which is sealed for 1,000 years, anticipates this [[Revelation 12:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.7&t=NKJV); [20:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.1-3&t=NKJV)]. And the establishment of the kingdom in an overall respect demands this, for Scripture clearly reveals that both *the earthly seed of Abraham* [Israel] and *the heavenly seed of Abraham* [the Church] *will reign with Christ in the kingdom at this time — one upon earth, the other in the heavens*.)

When God called the Church into existence, as when He called Israel into existence, there was a *purpose/goal* behind His calling; and the thought of eternal redemption in connection with Christianity (which too often is erroneously made the key issue) doesn’t even begin to deal with the matter. Christians have been called into existence (they have become possessors of eternal life) to realize *an inheritance “reserved in heaven,”* associated with a “salvation” to be revealed ([1 Peter 1:3-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.3-11&t=NKJV)). Christians have been called into existence to be removed from one land, be placed in another, and realize the rights of primogeniture in that land.

Christians are to inhabit a heavenly land and occupy the throne as co-regents with Christ when He rules the nations with a rod of iron. And Christians, comprising “*the Church of the firstborn* [a called out group of firstborn sons]” — as Israel fulfilling the rights of primogeniture on earth — are to exercise a priestly function in this rule. Christians are not only to be “kings” but they are also to be “priests” in that day ([Revelation 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.10&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Exodus 19:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.5-6&t=NKJV)).

The nations are not only to be *ruled* by Christians (from a heavenly sphere) but the nations are to receive *spiritual blessings* through the position that Christians will occupy as well (as Christians exercise the full rights of the firstborn). And, as this rule progresses through Israel on earth (as a restored and believing Israel is placed at the head of the nations), *spiritual blessings* will flow out to the Gentile nations through Israel (as Israel exercises the full rights of the firstborn).

Christians being placed in this position in the heavens will affect the fulfillment of one part of [Genesis 22:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17&t=NKJV) (*the heavenly seed of Abraham* [*the stars of the heaven*] will “*possess the gate of their enemies* [rule over his enemies]”); and Israel being placed in this position on earth will affect the fulfillment of the other part of [Genesis 22:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17&t=NKJV) as well (*the earthly* seed of Abraham [“*the sand which is upon the seashore*”] will “*possess the gate of his enemies*”).

Then [Genesis 22:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.18&t=NKJV) will be fulfilled in relation to both heavenly and earthly aspects of the kingdom (“*And in your seed shall all the nations* [Gentile nations] *of the earth be blessed*” [*cf*. [Galatians 3:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.17-18&t=NKJV), [29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.29&t=NKJV)]). And this will bring a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees at the time of his call ([Genesis 12:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.1-3&t=NKJV)) long before either Israel or the Church was ever brought into existence.

[Genesis 22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV) will, thus, find its proper fulfillment in the coming age when God’s firstborn sons (Christ, Israel, and the Church [following the adoption]) occupy their proper places in relation to the earth as they exercise the rights of primogeniture.  *Israel will occupy the earthly sphere of the kingdom* in the capacity set forth in these verses; *the Church will occupy the heavenly sphere of the kingdom* in the capacity set forth in the same verses; and *Christ will rule in both spheres of the kingdom.*

Christ will rule *from His own throne in the heavenly Jerusalem*, with Christians occupying positions as co-heirs on the throne with Him ([Revelation 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Romans 8:14-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.14-21&t=NKJV)); and Christ will also rule *from David’s throne in the earthly Jerusalem*, in the midst of His people Israel ([Luke 1:31-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+1.31-33&t=NKJV)). Within this complete structure of the kingdom (heavenly and earthly spheres), *the seed of Abraham* will “*possess the gate*” of the enemy, and the Gentile nations of the earth will “*be blessed*.”

The nation of Israel in the Old Testament moved beyond the things surrounding the death of the paschal lambs in Egypt and advanced toward the land of Canaan. However, the actions of “many” brought displeasure to the Lord; and these individuals were overthrown in the wilderness, short of realizing the purpose for their deliverance from Egypt ([1 Corinthians 10:1-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+10.1-5&t=NKJV)). They were overthrown on *the right side* of the blood but on *the wrong side* of the goal of their calling.

Thus it is with Christians during the present dispensation. They have appropriated the blood of the Passover Lamb and placed themselves in a position to move toward a heavenly land, wherein their calling will be realized. But the actions of “many” will bring about the displeasure of the Lord, resulting in their overthrow, short of realizing the purpose for their deliverance from this world. Their overthrow will occur on *the right side* of the blood but on *the wrong side* of the goal of their calling.

The Laodicean church sets forth the far-reaching heights of failure on the part of the Church in this respect. The Church in the latter days of the dispensation, saturated through and through with leaven, will be filled with Christians having no regard for the purpose surrounding their salvation. And one day, appearing at the judgment seat in this condition, they will suffer the fate awaiting those in the church in Laodicea who spurned the call to “repent.” They will be rejected for positions with Christ in the kingdom, failing to realize the very purpose for their salvation.

The Overcomer’s Promise

The promise that the overcomer will one day be allowed to sit with Christ on His throne comprises the pinnacle toward which all of the overcomer’s promises move. All of the promises are millennial in their scope of fulfillment, and all have to do with Christians occupying future positions as co-heirs with Christ. All point to and find their fulfillment in Christians exalted, with Christ, to the place for which they were called into existence.

Overcoming Christians occupying the throne with Christ must be properly equipped to fulfill all the functions of the office that they are to hold. Merely being seated on the throne in fulfillment of the seventh and last of the overcomer’s promises is insufficient in and of itself.

*All the things contained in the first six overcomer’s promises must also be realized in the lives of Christians as they occupy positions on the throne, for only in this manner will Christians come into possession of all which God requires for those ruling as co-heirs with His Son.*

1) Overcoming or Being Overcome

The analogy given in [Revelation 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV) has to do with Christians patterning their lives after Christ’s life, with *overcoming* and *the throne* in view. Christ overcame and is presently occupying a position with the Father on His throne, and Christians are to overcome and one day occupy a position with the Son on His throne. The exact wording of the text is, “. . . *to him that overcomes . . . even as I also overcame* . . . .” *A conflict, ending* *in victory*, is in view first; and then *the throne* comes into view. The latter is not attained without the former.

Christ’s overcoming is associated with His *sufferings* during the time of His shame, reproach, and rejection; and Scripture makes the matter very clear that overcoming for Christians is to be no different. Christ has “*suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps*”; and overcoming Christians must enter into these sufferings. Christians are told,

*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

*But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory is revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy*.” ([1 Peter 4:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.12-13&t=NKJV); *cf*. [1 Peter 2:21-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.21-23&t=NKJV))

The thought is very simple: Christians are to follow the example that Christ has left, knowing, as He knew, that connected with *the sufferings* is the shame, reproach, and rejection; but beyond all of this lies *the glory* ([Hebrews 12:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.1-2&t=NKJV)). In Revelation chapters two and three, *overcoming* is with a view to *the throne*; and in portions of Scripture such as the book of 1 Peter, *suffering* is with a view to *glory*. *Overcoming* is inseparably connected with *suffering*, as is *the throne* with *glory*.

The sufferings of Christ find their beginning in the fact that He “*came to His own* [own things], *and His own* [own people] *did not receive Him*” ([John 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.11&t=NKJV)).

(There is a distinction in the Greek text between two words in this verse that is not brought out in the English text at all. The gender of the first word translated “own” is neuter [pl.], indicating “things”; but the gender of the second is masculine [pl.], indicating “people.”)

The “things” to which Christ came refer to those things which were rightfully His: the Davidic throne, His own throne, the domain over which He was to rule, etc.; and the “people” to whom He came refer to His brethren after the flesh, the nation of Israel. Christ suffered at the hands of His own people, among others, because of things that were rightfully His, to which He came.

*All* the sufferings of Christ, after some fashion, were associated with His “own things”; and coming into possession of His “own things” is something that must not only follow His sufferings but is something that *can only be millennial* in its scope of fulfillment. His “own things” are intimately linked with His coming rule over the earth. He was born “King of the Jews,” He presented Himself to Israel as the nation’s “King,” He was crucified “King of the Jews,” and when He returns it will be as “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*” ([Matthew 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+2.2&t=NKJV); [21:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.5&t=NKJV); [27:37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.37&t=NKJV); [Revelation 19:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.16&t=NKJV)). Christ at that time, not before, will come into the realization of *His Kingship* and come into possession of *His own things*.

While here on earth the first time, at the beginning of His earthly ministry, Christ met the incumbent ruler (Satan) face-to-face in order to reveal that He was fully qualified to redeem that which the first Adam had forfeited in the fall. Such included not only fallen man ultimately being placed back in the position for which he was originally created, but it included the restoration of the ruined creation itself (the forfeited domain that was rightfully His).

Following this, He suffered rejection time and time again by the Jewish people; and the entire matter was climaxed by His being arrayed as a mock King by those to whom the Jewish religious leaders had delivered Him — the Gentile power of that day, the Romans.

Arraying Christ as a mock king, they placed a robe on Him, a crown of thorns on His head, and a reed for a scepter in His right hand. Then they bowed the knee to Him in a mocking fashion, ridiculing His true position as King, spiting upon Him, and taking the reed and striking Him on the head. And crucifixion then followed ([Matthew 27:27ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.27ff&t=NKJV)).

During all of this, His “own things” were held in abeyance. There was no attempt on Christ’s part to interfere with incumbent powers and authorities, whether of Satan and his angels holding the scepter in the heavens or of the Gentile nations holding the scepter here on earth. *It was not time for Him to take the scepter*. He suffered through all of this, climaxed by Calvary itself.

He has overcome, and the call has gone forth for Christians to overcome *as He overcame*. And overcoming, as He overcame, looks ahead to that future day when Christ will come into possession of His “own things,” *with overcoming Christians ascending the throne with Him.*

The things of that day though are *future* in their entirety and have nothing to do with man during the present day and time. Man during the present day and time is still living during the day of Christ’s shame, reproach, and rejection; and the attitude that Christians are to exhibit toward the “things” to which Christ came *must* parallel the attitude that Christ took toward these things when He was upon earth the first time.

Involvement in the affairs of the present world system does not become Christians at all. Such involvement will result in their being overcome by the world rather than their overcoming the world. It is occupying an opposite position to that which Christ occupied relative to a world controlled by Satan and his angels by and through the Gentile nations. The words, “*as I also overcame*,” and the words, “*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps*,” must be pondered and heeded by any Christian aspiring to be an overcomer.

When Christ returns to earth the second time, He will once again come to *His own things* and to *His own people*; but this time *He will come into possession of His own things, and His own people will receive Him*.

Many of the things to which Christ came in the past and will come in the future, given to Him by the Father, are presently being extended to Christians. Overcoming Christians are to inherit with Christ; and, insofar as the heavenly aspect of the kingdom is concerned, these Christians are to participate with Christ in the things to which He came almost two millennia ago. Christians occupying their proper place in Christ’s rejection, shame, and reproach today will result in these same Christians occupying their proper place in Christ’s acceptance, glory, and exaltation yet future.

2) My Throne, My Father’s Throne

The Son is presently seated with His Father on His Father’s throne ([Psalm 110:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+110.1&t=NKJV)). But, at the end of Man’s Day — for the duration of the Millennium, when the Lord’s Day will exist on earth — Christ will sit on His own throne; and it will be during this time that the overcomer’s promise in [Revelation 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV) will be fulfilled.

Following the Millennium, after all things have been brought under subjection to Christ, *the kingdom shall be delivered up “to God, even the Father.”* At that time the Son will also Himself “*be subject to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all*” ([1 Corinthians 15:24-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.24-28&t=NKJV)).

The Son’s throne will then cease to exist as a separate throne, and there will be one throne — “*the throne of God and of the Lamb*” ([Revelation 22:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.1&t=NKJV), [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.3&t=NKJV)).

The Father’s throne is the point from which God presently administers His rule throughout the entire universe. Messianic angels — Satan among them, though as a rebel ruler — presently rule under God throughout God’s creation ([Job 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Job+1.6&t=NKJV); [2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Job+2.1&t=NKJV); [Ezekiel 28:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.14&t=NKJV)). The earth, in this respect, is one of numerous provinces in God’s kingdom that are ruled by messianic angels.

Scripture clearly infers that numerous provinces (worlds) exist throughout the universe, over which messianic angels rule. The scene presented in Job chapters one and two is that of Satan appearing in the midst of certain other angels who can only be his equals (*i.e.*, other messianic angels who rule under God over other provinces, as Satan rules the earth under God). And it appears that within the sphere of God’s government of the universe these messianic angels are summoned into His presence at scheduled intervals in what could be called *congresses of the sons of God*.

(Man, during the past several years, has, for the first time, been able to look through his powerful telescopes and see some of the other solar systems in his own galaxy [similar to the one in which he lives]. Man now knows, through his own scientific achievements, that other solar systems exist in the universe. And the more man views the heavens with his increasingly powerful telescopes, the more he realizes that these other solar system are far more numerous than he at first thought. But this is as far as he can go with the matter within his science.

Scripture though *begins beyond the point* where man presently finds himself. Scripture begins at the point of revealing that messianic angels rule over provinces in the universe, simply inferring that other provinces exist [provinces other than the earth, which man is presently discovering]. And these could only be other provinces in other solar systems [*i.e*., planets revolving around other stars (the earth’s sun is a medium-size star)], not only in our galaxy but probably in all the estimated billions of galaxies scattered throughout the universe.

Scripture no more attempts to prove the existence of these other provinces than it does the existence of God Himself. As with the existence of God, Scripture simply deals with these other provinces from the standpoint that they exist, providing revelation beginning at this point.

It is left to finite man to believe that he has wrought some great astronomical achievement through recent findings, made possible by his use of more powerful telescopes and an orbiting telescope. Man though, in his scientific achievements in this realm, *has not even arrived at the point where Scripture, dealing with these things, begins; nor can man ever arrive at this point through his science*.

Actually, man, in his quest for knowledge pertaining to all that exists in the universe, has yet to arrive at and believe or understand the simplicity of the very opening words of Scripture — “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*” [[Genesis 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1&t=NKJV)].

Had man simply turned to and believed the Scriptures in the beginning, rather than seeking answers through science, he could have learned millennia ago things concerning how the universe was brought into existence [something that *he can never discover* within his science] or how the universe is structured [something that *he can only begin to discover* within his finite scientific ability].)

Christ is presently seated with His Father upon a throne from which the government of the entire universe is administered. The future government that Christ will administer from His own throne though will be limited to the earth over which Satan presently rules, for He is to replace Satan and rule over the same domain.

The other messianic angels are not in view at all in this sphere of activity. They administer affairs over provinces unrelated to Satan’s domain and unrelated to the reason for the appearances of the first man, the first Adam, and the second Man, the last Adam.

The creation of man, in keeping with the entire matter, is peculiar to the earth. Man’s creation is *directly related to the governmental administration of this earth*; and once man finds himself in the position that he was created to occupy (when he finds himself seated on the throne with the second Man, the last Adam, ruling over the earth), his rule will have to do with *this earth alone*.

Angelic rule on the earth will be affected, for man will replace angels ([Hebrews 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.5&t=NKJV)); but angelic rule elsewhere in the universe will remain completely unaffected. Angelic rule elsewhere in the universe had no involvement with Satan’s fall and man’s subsequent creation.

Satan and his angels are the ones who rebelled, resulting in their disqualification to rule and necessitating their ultimate removal. Satan sought a regal position above that in which God had placed him; he sought a regal position above the other messianic angels; he sought to occupy a position in which he would be like God Himself, from which he could administer power and authority throughout the universe.

He led a great host of the angels ruling under him in this rebellion, and his failure to succeed brought about a wrecked kingdom and the pronouncement of judgment ([Isaiah 14:13-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.13-17&t=NKJV); [Genesis 1:1-2a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-2a&t=NKJV)).

The creation was later restored, and man was brought into existence for the express purpose of taking the scepter that Satan had forfeited. However, man’s fall resulted in both *a ruined creature* and *a ruined creation*, necessitating the appearance at a later date of the second Man, the last Adam, with a view to the subsequent “*restitution of all things*” ([Genesis 1:2-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2-28&t=NKJV); [3:6-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.6-7&t=NKJV), [17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.17-18&t=NKJV) [2b]; [Acts 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.21&t=NKJV)). Only after all things have been restored will man realize his calling — holding the scepter while seated on the throne with Christ.

All things relating to man — *his creation, fall, redemption*, and *coming rule* — are peculiarly related to the earth. Thus, during the coming age, the only change in governmental affairs throughout God’s universe will be in the sphere of Satan’s present governmental administration — his rule over the earth upon which man resides.

On this province, man, realizing his high calling, will come into the position previously occupied by angels; but elsewhere in the universe, angelic rule over other provinces in the kingdom of God can only continue unchanged.

Concluding Thoughts:

Christendom, near the conclusion of this dispensation, will be marked by one main feature, foretold almost two millennia in advance: *Apostasy*. This is the situation revealed by the sequential arrangement of the first four parables in Matthew chapter thirteen, the seven churches in Revelation chapters two and three, the books of 2 Peter and Jude, and by portions of Scripture such as [1 Timothy 4:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+4.1ff&t=NKJV) and [Luke 18:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+18.8&t=NKJV). The working of the leaven that the woman placed in the three measures of meal in [Matthew 13:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.33&t=NKJV) cannot be checked or stopped within the lukewarm confines of the Laodicean Church of today. Deterioration will continue *until the whole has been leavened*.

The people of God though have not been left alone and helpless against the deteriorating process of the leaven. God has promised that He will *never leave nor forsake* His people ([Deuteronomy 31:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+31.6&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 13:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+13.5&t=NKJV)). Christians are in possession of *God’s Word* and *the indwelling Holy Spirit*; and a knowledge of this Word, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is *the one great protection, the only protection*, that Christians possess against the false doctrine produced by the working of the leaven (*cf*. [Isaiah 8:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+8.20&t=NKJV); [John 16:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+16.13-15&t=NKJV); [17:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+17.14&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 4:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+4.16&t=NKJV); [Philippians 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.6&t=NKJV); [Colossians 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+3.10&t=NKJV)).

Then, God’s Son has promised that He will be with Christians *until the end of the age* ([Matthew 28:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+28.19-20&t=NKJV)); and, as depicted in the message to the church in Laodicea, He stands and knocks at the door of the lukewarm Church during the final eroding stages of the working of the leaven, extending an invitation to any Christian who will heed His voice.

This invitation, contextually, is with a view to *overcoming*; and overcoming is, in turn, with a view to ultimately occupying *a position with Christ on His throne*.

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Chapter 12

**Crowned Rulers**

*After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”*

*Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.*

*And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.*

*Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.*

*The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:*

*“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”* ([Revelation 4:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-4&t=NKJV), [10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10-11&t=NKJV))

The book of Revelation opens in chapter one with brief statements concerning Christ, which center on His return and subsequent reign ([Revelation 1:1-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1-8&t=NKJV)). The book then continues with events surrounding John being removed from Man’s Day on earth and placed in the Lord’s Day in heaven. This is followed by a revelation of that which John saw in heaven — *the complete Church in Christ’s presence,* represented by *all seven churches in* [*Revelation 2*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV)*;* [*3*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV). And Christ, seen in the midst of these seven churches, appears as *a Judge*, not as a Priest.

*The complete Church, all Christians* — shown by the number “seven” (pointing to *the completion of that which is in view* [*i.e*., *the Church*]) — is seen in Christ’s presence in *a judgmental scene*. Only one sequence of events could possibly be in view.

It is evident that John, along with being removed from Man’s Day and being placed in the Lord’s Day, was also moved forward in time. He was moved to a time at the end of the present dispensation, for not only is the removal of the Church from the earth seen in John being removed from the earth, but that which will occur immediately following the Church being removed is shown by that which John saw in heaven — *the complete Church in Christ’s presence, with Christ appearing as Judge.*

Thus, following introductory remarks concerning Christ (which are Messianic in nature), the rapture, followed by the judgment seat, is clearly revealed to be the subject set forth in Revelation chapter one. And this, in turn, introduces the material that follows.

Chapters two and three then continue with that which was introduced in chapter one, providing information concerning each of the seven churches seen in Christ’s presence in chapter one. This information is given in seven short epistles, directed through an angel to each church, with all of the epistles structured exactly the same way.

Each epistle is introduced by a reference to Christ’s description, as Judge, from chapter one (either from something stated in this description or from something directly related to that which is seen in the description). This is followed in each epistle by the statement, “*I know your works*”; each church is then dealt with on the basis of *works*, with a view to Christians *overcoming* or *being overcome*. And the overcomer’s promises are, in turn, *millennial* in their scope of fulfillment.

Thus, insofar as the main message of the book is concerned — *judgment* — chapters two and three simply present a continuation from chapter one. That is, these two chapters (through that which is stated in each of these seven epistles), detail events relating to each of the seven churches at the judgment introduced in chapter one.

Christians have been saved to “*bring forth fruit*.” They have been created in Christ Jesus “*for good works*” ([John 15:1-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+15.1-8&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-10&t=NKJV)). And the entire matter concerns “overcoming” during the present day with a view to occupying the “throne” with Christ during the coming day. Christians who are to ascend the throne and rule and reign with Christ *must be overcomers, for only by realizing that which has been promised to the overcomers in chapters two and three will Christians be properly equipped to occupy this high office*.

Then, [Revelation 4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4&t=NKJV) of this book begins the same way in which matters surrounding the Church are introduced in [Revelation 1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1&t=NKJV) — by a reference once again to the removal of the Church from the earth. And the reference is apparently repeated to show another facet to that which was previously dealt with in the seven epistles to the seven churches in Asia.

Even though John was moved forward in time, to the end of the present dispensation (over 1,900 years removed from his time), and saw the Church in heaven at the end of the dispensation, the Church was actually still back on earth near the beginning of the dispensation. And the seven epistles to seven existing churches in Asia, along with providing details surrounding the actual judgment of Christians at the end of the dispensation (continuing from that which had been introduced in chapter one), also provide a history of the Church during the course of the dispensation.

It is evident that the seven epistles in these two chapters have been structured in a dispensational framework of this nature, beginning with the church in Ephesus (which left its “*first love*” [[Revelation 2:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.4&t=NKJV)]) and ending with the church in Laodicea (described as “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” [[Revelation 3:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.17&t=NKJV)]). At the beginning of the dispensation, Christendom could be seen in the state described in the message to the church in Ephesus; but, at the end of the dispensation, Christendom will be seen in the state described in the message to the church in Laodicea.

And the repetition of John being removed from Man’s Day and placed in the Lord’s Day provides additional information pertaining to that which will occur in heaven following the removal of the Church but preceding the Tribulation on earth (seen in [Revelation 6-19a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6-19a&t=NKJV)).

The account of John’s removal from the earth in chapter one shows that which will occur in heaven immediately following the Church’s removal at the end of the dispensation — *judgment*. And the same account repeated in chapter four shows that which will occur in heaven immediately following the judgment of Christians (seen in [Revelation 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2&t=NKJV); [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3&t=NKJV)) — *twenty-four elders arising from their thrones and relinquishing their crowns to the One who had originally placed them in the positions that they occupied, seated on thrones, and crowned*.

Crowns Cast before the Throne

Though the same beginning point is seen in both chapters one and four (John’s removal from the earth, his removal from Man’s Day, his being placed in the Lord’s Day, and his being moved forward in time), revelation in chapter four immediately moves forward to *a time following events of the judgment seat* (chapters 2, 3) *but still preceding the beginning of the Tribulation on earth* ([Revelation 6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6&t=NKJV)).

The first thing that John saw in heaven in chapter four, following a repetition of the same beginning point previously seen in chapter one, was a rainbow-encircled throne, surrounded by twenty-four other thrones. God was seated on the central throne, and twenty-four elders were seated on the surrounding thrones. The twenty-four elders were clothed in “*white robes*,” and they “*had crowns of gold on their heads*” ([Revelation 4:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.2-4&t=NKJV)).

Then, following a description of the throne of God and “*living creatures*” who resided “*around the throne*” ([Revelation 4:5-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.5-9&t=NKJV)), attention was directed back to the twenty-four elders. They removed themselves from their thrones, fell down before the throne of God, worshiped God, *cast their crowns before His throne*, and expressed adoration to the One worthy “*to receive glory and honor and power*” ([Revelation 4:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10-11&t=NKJV)).

Events surrounding the twenty-four elders removing themselves from their thrones and casting their crowns before God’s throne have been recorded at this particular place in the book for definite and specific purposes. These events, contrary to that which is often taught, do not at all depict the actions of Christians following issues of the judgment seat. Christians are not to sit on thrones surrounding God’s throne. Rather, *they are to sit, at a later time, with Christ on His throne after the fashion revealed in* [*Revelation 3:21*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV)*.*

Nor will Christians possess crowns at the time of the events seen in chapter four. Christians coming into the possession of crowns will *result from* issues and determinations made at the judgment seat, but Christians will not actually *receive* crowns until after Christ returns to the earth and overthrows Gentile world power (which rules under Satan and his angels [[Daniel 10:13-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.13-20&t=NKJV)]).

When Christ returns to the earth at the conclusion of the Tribulation, He will have many crowns upon His head ([Revelation 19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV)); but these crowns, by comparing this section in Revelation with other Scriptures on the subject, are not crowns that Christ will wear during the Messianic Era. Christ is destined to wear the crown that Satan presently wears; and at the time Christ returns to the earth, Satan will still be in possession of his crown. Satan’s crown will have to be taken from him (by force) and given to Christ before Christ can actually sit upon the throne and occupy, in its fullest sense, the position depicted in [Revelation 19:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.16&t=NKJV): “*King of kings, and Lord of lords.*”

1) Saul and David — Satan and Christ

Certain things concerning crowns, especially relative to the crown that Christ is to wear, can possibly best be illustrated by referring to the typology of Saul and David in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel.

Saul had been anointed king over Israel, but Saul rebelled against the Lord and was rejected (as king) by the Lord ([1 Samuel 10:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Samuel+10.1ff&t=NKJV); [15:1-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Samuel+15.1-23&t=NKJV)). David was then anointed king in Saul’s stead ([1 Samuel 16:1-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Samuel+16.1-13&t=NKJV)). However, Saul did not immediately relinquish the throne; nor did David make an attempt to immediately ascend the throne. Saul, even though rejected and his anointed successor on hand, was allowed to continue his reign.

Affairs continued after this fashion in the camp of Israel until David eventually found himself in exile, living out in the hills (*e.g*., in the cave of Adullam). During this time, certain individuals who were dissatisfied with existing conditions in the camp of Israel under Saul gathered themselves to David ([1 Samuel 22:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Samuel+22.1-2&t=NKJV)). They separated themselves from affairs in the kingdom under Saul and lived out in the hills with David. He became “*a captain over them*”; and they were faithful to him, anticipating the day when Saul would be put down and David would take the kingdom.

The day eventually came when this occurred. Saul, following a battle and an attempted suicide, was slain by an Amalekite. His crown was taken and delivered to David ([1 Samuel 31:1-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Samuel+31.1-13&t=NKJV); [2 Samuel 1:1-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Samuel+1.1-10&t=NKJV)). *Then*, David and his faithful men moved in and took over the government ([2 Samuel 2:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Samuel+2.1ff&t=NKJV)).

The entire sequence of events depicting Saul and David typifies great spiritual truths concerning Satan and Christ.

Just as Saul was anointed king over Israel, Satan was anointed king over the earth.

Just as Saul rebelled against the Lord and was rejected, Satan rebelled against the Lord and was rejected.

Just as David was anointed king while Saul continued to reign, Christ was anointed King while Satan continued to reign.

Just as David did not immediately ascend the throne, Christ did not immediately ascend the throne.

Just as David eventually found himself in a place removed from the kingdom (out in the hills), Christ eventually found Himself in a place removed from the kingdom (heaven).

Just as David gathered certain faithful men to himself during this time (anticipating his future reign), Christ is presently gathering certain faithful men to Himself (anticipating His future reign).

Just as the day came when Saul was put down, the day will come when Satan will be put down.

Just as Saul’s crown was taken and given to David, Satan’s crown will be taken and given to Christ.

And just as David and his faithful followers *then moved in and took over the government*, Christ and His faithful followers *will then move in and take over the government*.

2) Purpose for the Present Dispensation

A principle of divine government set forth in the type of Saul and David shows the necessity of an incumbent ruler, although rejected, continuing to reign until replaced by his successor. The government of the earth is a rule under God through delegated powers and authorities. In this respect, Satan rules directly under God (though a rebel ruler), and a great host of subordinate angels rule with him.

Even though Satan and his followers have been rejected, they must continue in power (as Saul and those ruling with him) until replaced by Christ and His followers (as when David and his faithful followers took the kingdom). *God will not, at any time*, allow conditions to exist upon the earth in which there is no divinely administered government by and through delegated powers and authorities. Even though the government of the earth is in disarray today, because of Satan’s rebellion, it is still under God’s sovereign power and control ([Daniel 4:17-34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.17-34&t=NKJV)).

The present dispensation is the time during which the antitype of David’s faithful followers being gathered to him occurs. As during David’s time, so during the present time — *there must be a period, preceding the King coming into power, during which the rulers are called out.*

David’s men were the ones who occupied positions of power and authority with him after he took Saul’s crown. Thus will it be when Christ takes Satan’s crown. Those who are being called out during the present time are the ones who will occupy positions of power and authority with Him during that coming day.

Satan will be allowed to continue his reign *until* God’s purpose for this present dispensation has been accomplished. *Then*, he and those ruling with him will be put down, and an entirely new order of rulers will take the kingdom. Christ will enter into the position previously occupied by Satan, and Christians will enter into positions previously occupied by angels ruling under Satan.

Since Christ (replacing Satan) will wear the crown presently worn by Satan, it only naturally follows that Christians (replacing subordinate powers and authorities) will wear crowns presently worn by angels ruling under Satan. All of these are crowns that neither Christ nor Christians can come into possession of *until* Satan and his angels have been put down at the end of the Tribulation.

3) Angelic Rule About to End

The originally established angelic rule over the earth has continued uninterrupted since the beginning, preceding man’s existence on the earth. However, with the creation of Adam, God announced that *a change was in the offing*. Man, an entirely new creation, made after *the image* and *likeness* of God, was brought into existence *to take the governmental reins of the earth* ([Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV)).

But the first man (the first Adam), through sin, was disqualified, necessitating the appearance of the second Man (the last Adam) to effect redemption and the ultimate realization for man’s creation. The price has been paid, but redemption includes far more than that which presently exists. Redemption includes *the complete man* (body, soul, and spirit), it includes *the earth* (presently under a curse), and *the goal of redemption* will be realized only when man has been brought into the position for which he was created (ruling over a restored earth).

Scripture clearly attests to the fact that the “*world* [‘inhabited world’] *to come*” *will not be placed “in subjection” to angels* ([Hebrews 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.5&t=NKJV)). *Man* is the one to whom power and authority will be delegated; and the action of the twenty-four elders removing themselves from their thrones and casting their crowns before God’s throne in [Revelation 4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10&t=NKJV) can only be with a view to the fact that the government of the earth, at this point, is about to change hands.

These twenty-four elders can only be *heavenly beings* (angels) who, up to the time of their action in [Revelation 4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10&t=NKJV), held positions within a sphere of governmental power and authority relative to the earth.

(Some Bible students, on the basis of the pronouns used in [Revelation 5:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.9-10&t=NKJV) — “us” and “we” [KJV] — have understood the twenty-four elders to represent redeemed men, not angels. However, the majority of the better Greek manuscripts render the pronouns in [Revelation 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.10&t=NKJV) as “them” and “they” [*ref*. ASV, NASB, NIV, Wuest, Weymouth], giving rise to the thought that the pronoun “us” in [Revelation 5:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.9&t=NKJV) is probably a scribal insertion, being spurious [*ref*. Alford, Lenski].

But the matter is really not left to manuscript evidence alone. That the pronouns “them” and “they” are correct is evident from the context. Note that the song in [Revelation 5:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.9-10&t=NKJV) is apparently sung not only by the “*twenty-four elders*” but also by the “*living creatures*” as well. Then, other angels join them in [Revelation 5:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.11ff&t=NKJV), with all of the angels together voicing additional, related statements.

Aside from the preceding, it would make absolutely no sense whatsoever to understand these twenty-four elders as referring to a segment of redeemed mankind. Man couldn’t possibly be crowned at the time of events in [Revelation 4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4&t=NKJV); [5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5&t=NKJV), else he would be crowned before Christ is crowned [note that Christ is to wear the crown that Satan presently wears, which Satan will still be wearing at this time]. Also, man is to wear the crown he receives, not relinquish it before God’s throne as seen being done by the twenty-four elders.

Also, the Greek word translated “*elders*” in Revelation chapter four is *presbuteroi*, the same word used for “*elders*” in the Church in the New Testament epistles. The word refers to *older ones* [relative to that being dealt with]. In the Church, the reference is to *older ones in the faith*; in Revelation chapter four, the reference is to *older ones in the governmental structure of the earth* [evident since they are crowned, seated on thrones, with the government of the earth being the only government which could possibly be in view].

The preceding alone would prevent the twenty-four elders from being viewed as men, necessitating that they be viewed as *angels. Man, at this point in the book, has yet to even come into such a position; angels, on the other hand, have held positions of this nature since time immemorial*.)

And at this point in the book, through the action of the twenty-four elders casting their crowns before God’s throne, the way will be opened for God to transfer the government of the earth from the hands of angels to the hands of man.

(These crowns are cast before God’s throne [*cf*. [Revelation 4:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1-4&t=NKJV); [5:1-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.1-7&t=NKJV)] because *the Father alone* is the One who places and/or removes rulers in His kingdom [[Daniel 4:17-37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.17-37&t=NKJV); [5:18-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+5.18-21&t=NKJV)]. *He alone* is the One who placed those represented by the twenty-four elders in the positions which they occupied; and *He alone* is the One who will place individuals in particular positions in the kingdom of Christ [[Matthew 20:20-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+20.20-23&t=NKJV)].

These crowns cast before God’s throne, as previously seen, can only have to do with *the government of the earth*. And, at this point in the book, they can be worn by angels alone, for the Son will not yet have taken the kingdom [*cf*. [Daniel 7:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.13-14&t=NKJV); [Revelation 11:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.15&t=NKJV)].

These crowns are relinquished to God [with a view to man, rather than angels, ruling in the kingdom] so that God can appoint those who had previously been shown qualified at events surrounding the judgment seat [[Revelation 1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-3&t=NKJV)] to positions of power and authority; and those whom God appoints will wear these crowns in Christ’s kingdom.)

The transfer of the government of the earth, from the hands of angels to the hands of man, in reality, is what the first nineteen chapters of the book of Revelation are about; and, as well, this is what the whole of Scripture preceding these nineteen chapters is also about. In this respect, these twenty-four elders casting their crowns before God’s throne forms *a key event that one must grasp if he would properly understand the book of Revelation and Scripture as a whole.*

Christ and His bride, in that coming day, will rule the earth in the stead of Satan and his angels. And, in the process of ruling in this manner, they will wear *all the crowns* worn by Satan and his angels prior to his fall.

Thus, that which is depicted through the action of the twenty-four elders in [Revelation 4:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10-11&t=NKJV) is, contextually, self-explanatory. This has to do with the government of the earth, it occurs at a time following events surrounding the judgment seat but preceding Christ breaking the seals of the seven-sealed scroll, and it occurs at a time when Satan’s reign is about to be brought to a close.

After events in Revelation chapters one through three have come to pass, *for the first time in man’s history*, the person (the bride) who is to rule with the One (Christ) to replace Satan will have been made known and shown forth. And events in the fourth chapter reflect that fact.

Only one thing could possibly be in view at this point in the book, for the bride will not only have been made known but will be ready for events surrounding the transfer of power to begin. The twenty-four elders casting their crowns before God’s throne can only depict the angels who did not go along with Satan in his rebellion; and they *willingly* relinquish their crowns, with a view to those comprising the bride wearing these crowns during the Messianic Era.

But the crowns worn by Satan and those angels presently ruling with him are another matter. These crowns will have to be taken from Satan and his angels, *by force* when Christ returns to overthrow Gentile world power at the end of the Tribulation (a power exercised during Man’s Day under Satan and his angels [[Daniel 10:13-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.13-20&t=NKJV)]).

The identity of *the twenty-four elders* is shown not only by their actions and the place in which this occurs in the book but also by their *number*. Comparing Revelation chapters four and twelve ([Revelation 4:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.4&t=NKJV), [10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10-11&t=NKJV); [12:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.3-4&t=NKJV)), it appears evident that the government of the earth — originally established by God prior to Satan’s fall — was representatively shown by *three sets of twelve, thirty-six crowned rulers*. “Three” is the number of *divine perfection*, and “twelve” is the number of *governmental perfection*.

Those angels who did not follow Satan in his attempt to exalt his throne would be represented by the twenty-four elders — *two sets of twelve, showing two-thirds of the original contingent of angels ruling with Satan*. And the angels who did go along with Satan, presently ruling with him, would be represented by *a third set of twelve, showing the other one-third of the original contingent of angels ruling with Satan* ([Revelation 12:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.3-4&t=NKJV)).

In this respect, these three representative sets of twelve would show *divine perfection in the earth’s government*. And, also in this respect, this same perfection in the structure of the earth’s government has not existed *since Satan’s attempt to acquire a position of power and authority above that which had originally been delegated to him.*

But, this structured perfection will one day again exist in the earth’s government. When Christ and His bride ascend the throne together, *crowns worn by those represented by all three sets of twelve will be brought together again. Then, divine perfection will once again exist in the government of the one province in God’s universe where imperfection has existed for millennia.*

Two Types of Crowns

There are two words in the Greek text of the New Testament that are translated “crown” in English versions. The first and most widely used word is *stephanos* (or the verb form, *stephanoo*), referring to a “victor’s crown” or a crown denoting certain types of “worth” or “valor.” The other word is *diadema*, referring to “regal authority,” “kingly power.”

*Stephanos* (or the verb form, *stephanoo*) is the only word used for “crown” in the New Testament outside the book of Revelation. This, for example, is the word used referring to the “*crown of thorns*” placed upon Christ’s head immediately preceding His crucifixion ([Matthew 27:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.29&t=NKJV); [Mark 15:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+15.17&t=NKJV); [John 19:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.2&t=NKJV), [5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.5&t=NKJV)). This is also the word used throughout the Pauline epistles, referring to “crowns” awaiting faithful Christians ([1 Corinthians 9:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.25&t=NKJV); [Philippians 4:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+4.1&t=NKJV); [1 Thessalonians 2:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+2.19&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.5&t=NKJV); [4:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.8&t=NKJV)). James, Peter, and John also used *stephanos* in this same sense ([James 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 5:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.4&t=NKJV); [Revelation 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.10&t=NKJV); [3:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.11&t=NKJV)). The writer of Hebrews used this word (the verb form, *stephanoo*) referring to positions that will ultimately be occupied by Christ and His co-heirs in “*the world* [inhabited world] *to come*” ([Hebrews 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.7&t=NKJV), [9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.9&t=NKJV)). Then John used the word six additional times in the book of Revelation in several different senses ([Revelation 4:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.4&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10&t=NKJV); [6:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.2&t=NKJV); [9:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+9.7&t=NKJV); [12:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.1&t=NKJV); [14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV)).

*Diadema*, the other word used for “crown” in the New Testament, appears only three times; and all three occurrences are in the latter part of the book of Revelation ([Revelation 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.3&t=NKJV); [13:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.1&t=NKJV); [19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV)). The first two references ([Revelation 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.3&t=NKJV); [13:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.1&t=NKJV)) have to do with power and authority possessed by incumbent earthly rulers immediately preceding and within the kingdom of Antichrist, and the latter reference ([Revelation 19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV)) has to do with power and authority that Christ will possess at the time He returns and takes the kingdom.

The way in which these two words are used in the New Testament relative to the government of the earth must be borne in mind if one is to properly understand the Scriptural distinction between the use of *stephanos* and *diadema*. *Diadema* (referring to the monarch’s crown) is used *only* where one has actually *entered into* and *is presently exercising regal power*. *Stephanos* is never used in this respect; it appears in all other occurrences, covering any instance where the word “crown” is used *apart from* the present possession of regal power. The possession of such power at a future date (or a past date) can be in view through the use of *stephanos*. Then, *diadema* is used when one actually comes into possession of this power.

In this respect, overcoming Christians have been promised a *stephanos* (victor’s crown), never a *diadema* (monarch’s crown); *but* the promised *stephanos will become a diadema* at the time overcoming Christians assume positions on the throne with Christ. There can be no such thing as either Christ or His co-heirs wearing a *stephanos* in that day. They can only wear the type crown referred to by the word *diadema*.

To illustrate the matter, note how *stephanos* and *diadema* are used relative to the Antichrist and his kingdom. *Stephanos* is used of the type crown worn by the Antichrist when he is first introduced in the book of Revelation ([Revelation 6:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.2&t=NKJV)), but later *diadema* is used relative to his exercise of delegated power and authority ([Revelation 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.3&t=NKJV); [13:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.1-2&t=NKJV)).

The Antichrist is seen wearing a “crown,” as he goes forth “*conquering, and to conquer*” in Revelation chapter six. He is crowned and moves after the described fashion in view of ultimately attaining *regal power over the earth*; but, at this time, as shown by both the context and the word *stephanos*, he has not attained such power.

Then, in chapter twelve he is once again seen wearing a “crown” (all seven heads are crowned at this point in the book. The Antichrist will be the seventh head [seventh ruler] in a succession of rulers), and in chapter thirteen those ruling with him (the ten horns) are also crowned. As shown by both the context and the word *diadema*, the matter is entirely different at this point in the book. The Antichrist is seen to have attained *regal power over the earth*, and he will have subordinate rulers exercising power with him. Thus, *diadema*, not *stephanos*, is used in these passages.

The use of *stephanos* relative to crowns in connection with Israel in [Revelation 12:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.1&t=NKJV) illustrates the same truth. Israel today is not occupying the position for which the nation was called into existence — “*a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation*” ([Exodus 19:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.6&t=NKJV)). Israel is to one day rule upon the earth at the head of the nations, and the nations are to be blessed through Israel; but Israel will not occupy this position until *after* the time of [Revelation 12:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.1&t=NKJV). Thus, *stephanos* is the only word that could be used relative to crowns in connection with Israel at this point in time. The use of *diadema* in connection with Israel in this respect awaits events of the coming age, not seen in the book of Revelation until [Revelation 20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20&t=NKJV).

Then note the type of crowns on Christ’s head — past and future — in [Matthew 27:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.29&t=NKJV); [Revelation 14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV); [19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV). [Matthew 27:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.29&t=NKJV) refers to that past time when Christ was arrayed as a mock King. The word used for “crown” in this verse is *stephanos*. *Diadema* could not be used in this instance, for this word would show Christ actually exercising regal power and authority, wearing “*a crown of thorns*.” And this, of course, was something that He did not do at this time, particularly wearing “*a crown of thorns*.” Rather, the opposite was shown by the “*crown* [*stephanos*] *of thorns*” — *shame and humiliation, relative to the government of the earth*.

Then, in [Revelation 14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV), Christ is seen once again wearing a *stephanos* (though not “a crown of thorns” this time). And, again, there is no display of regal power, though that future time when he would wear a *diadema* is anticipated by both the time (near the end of the Tribulation) and His actions (anticipating His treading the winepress at the time of His return (*cf*. [Isaiah 63:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+63.1-6&t=NKJV); [Joel 3:9-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joel+3.9-16&t=NKJV); [Zechariah 14:1-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zechariah+14.1-9&t=NKJV); [Revelation 19:11-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11-21&t=NKJV)). This is the last time in Scripture that the word *stephanos* is used relative to a crown resting upon Christ’s head.

But, when that time arrives — anticipated by Christ seen with a *stephanos* on his head and a sharp sickle in His hand in [Revelation 14:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14.14&t=NKJV) — Christ will come forth wearing “*many crowns* [‘*diadems*’]” ([Revelation 19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.12&t=NKJV)). He can come forth in this manner at this time, for the Father will not only have delivered the kingdom into His hands but He will now have a consort queen and be ready to ascend the throne, wearing these “many *diadems*” (*cf*. [Daniel 7:13-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.13-14&t=NKJV); [Revelation 19:7-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.7-9&t=NKJV)). And because of this, when He comes forth, the announcement can be sounded for all to hear: “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*.”

He, at this future time, will have entered into His long-awaited regal position; and the first order of business following His dealings with Israel will be the putting down of the Beast, the kings of the earth, and Satan and his angels ([Revelation 19:17-20:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.17-20.3&t=NKJV)). They cannot be allowed to reign beyond the point Christ assumes regal power. Their crowns (*diadems*) *must, at this time, be taken and given to others — those to whom they will then rightfully belong*.

An understanding of the distinction between *stephanos* and *diadema* will also reveal certain things about the twenty-four elders that could not otherwise be known. They each cast a *stephanos* before the throne, not a *diadema*. This shows that they were *not then* occupying regal positions, though crowned and seated on thrones.

At one time they would have occupied such positions (wearing *diadems*); but with the disarray in the governmental structure of the earth, resulting from Satan’s rebellion, they ceased exercising regal power (for, not participating in his rebellion, they no longer retained active positions in his rule). Their crowns could then be referred to only through the use of the word *stephanos*; and these crowns would, of necessity, have to be retained until the time of [Revelation 4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.10&t=NKJV).

God’s system of government (an incumbent remaining in office *until* replaced by his successor) would necessitate the twenty-four elders retaining their crowns *until* their successors were on the scene and ready to ascend the throne. And at this point in the book, for the first time in man’s history, the one who is to rule with the second Man, the last Adam — Christ’s bride — will have been made known and shown forth. This will have occurred at events surrounding the judgment seat ([Revelation 1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1-3&t=NKJV)); and these elders can now cast their crowns before God’s throne ([Revelation 4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4&t=NKJV)), for their successors will be on the scene and ready to ascend the throne with Christ.

(For additional information on the action of the twenty-four elders in Revelation chapter four, refer to the author’s book, in this site, [The Time of the End BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-in-revelation.php#The%20Time%20of%20the%20End), Chapter 7, “Crowns Cast Before God’s Throne.”)

Five Different Crowns

There are five different crowns mentioned in the New Testament that are possible for Christians to win. Crowns worn by Christians during the coming day, it seems, will depict more than just the overcoming and reigning status of individuals. These crowns will apparently reveal certain things concerning the Christians’ victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil that qualified them to be recipients of crowns.

*First*, there is “*the crown of life*” ([James 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV); [Revelation 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.10&t=NKJV)). This is a crown given for enduring the trials and testing of life, even to the point of dying, if necessary. The man “*that endures* [patiently endures]” the present trials and testing of life will be awarded the crown of life after he has been “*tried* [approved].” This approval will occur through a testing of one’s works at the judgment seat, and the crown will be awarded at a point following this testing.

*Second*, there is “*the crown of glory*” ([1 Peter 5:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.2-4&t=NKJV)). This is a crown that will be given to those individuals faithfully exercising their calling as undershepherds of the flock. God has called certain individuals (*e.g*., pastor-teachers) during the present day to tend, lead, and nourish the flock, “*which He purchased with His own blood*” ([Acts 20:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.28&t=NKJV)); and those who have been placed in this position can earn the crown of glory through faithfulness to their calling.

*Third*, there is “*the crown of rejoicing* [boasting]” ([1 Thessalonians 2:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+2.19-20&t=NKJV)). This is a crown that appears to be peculiarly related to soul-winning in its true sense, *i.e*., winning the saved to a life of faithfulness in view of the coming kingdom, rewards, etc. (*cf*. [Philippians 3:20-4:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+3.20-4.1&t=NKJV); [1 Thessalonians 2:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+2.11ff&t=NKJV)). “*The crown of rejoicing* [boasting]” is closely associated with “*the crown of glory*” in the sense that the primary thought behind both is soul-winning.

The primary duty of a pastor-teacher, for example, lies in this realm; and he can win “*the crown of glory*” through faithfulness therein. This crown though is not just for pastor-teachers. Rather, it is for *any Christian* who ministers in this realm (*cf*. [James 5:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+5.19-20&t=NKJV)), making the task of the pastor-teacher that much easier.

*Fourth*, There is “*the crown of righteousness*” ([2 Timothy 4:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+4.7-8&t=NKJV)). This is a crown that will be given to those who “*love his appearing*.” The text in 2 Timothy has to do with Christians being victorious in the present race *of the faith* (*cf*. [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV); [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV)), looking ahead to the promised “*glorious appearing* [appearing of the glory] *of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ*” ([Titus 2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+2.13&t=NKJV)).

*Fifth*, there is “*the imperishable* (KJV: ‘incorruptible’) *crown*” ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-27&t=NKJV)). This is a crown that will be given to those who run the present race of the faith in the correct fashion. It is described in the text as a race in which one strives for the mastery over the fleshly desires and appetites of the body. The word in the Greek text translated “*competes* (KJV: ‘striveth’)” is *agonizomai*, from which the English word “agonize” is derived. The thought is that every muscle of one’s being is to be strained, if necessary, to obtain the mastery over all fleshly desires and appetites. A Christian so running the race in which he is presently engaged has been promised this crown.

Concluding Thoughts:

Actions depicting the transference of regal power and authority first come into view in the book of Revelation following God’s righteous dealings with the Church and preceding God’s righteous dealings with Israel and the nations. The shift *away from* God’s dealings with the Church *to* His dealings with Israel and the nations is a shift *away from* the sphere where power and authority will lie *into* that sphere where power and authority presently lie (*i.e.*, with the Gentile nations ruling under Satan during both the times of the Gentiles and Man’s Day).

Thus, once the overcomers have been revealed through issues of the judgment seat, there is then an act by the twenty-four elders showing a transference of power *that is about to occur.* This is then followed by God focusing His attention upon the earth-dwellers, *with the same end in view*. Satan and his angels will be put down, the Times of the Gentiles will end, Man’s Day will end, and *those to whom the kingdom rightfully belongs will receive diadems of varying types and be elevated into their proper positions, seated on the throne with Christ.*

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Chapter 13

**Kings of the Kingdom**

*And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*  ([Revelation 19:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.16&t=NKJV)).

All Scripture, beginning with the writings of Moses, moves toward one great climactic event — that future day when the Stone *“cut out without hands” smites “the image,” becomes “a great mountain,”* and *fills “the whole earth”* ([Daniel 2:34-35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.34-35&t=NKJV), [44-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.44-45&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Isaiah 2:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+2.2-4&t=NKJV)). The reference is to the coming kingdom of Christ, *the kingdom of our Lord,* succeeding *the kingdom of this world* — the present kingdom under Satan ([Revelation 11:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.15&t=NKJV)). The entire creation is presently *groaning* and *travailing in pain* together, waiting for that future day ([Romans 8:17-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.17-23&t=NKJV)).

[Revelation 19:11-20:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11-20.6&t=NKJV) — revealing the return of Christ, the overthrow of the kings and rulers of the earth, the binding of Satan, and Christ’s millennial reign — sets forth, in very brief, concise form, concluding events toward which the whole of Scripture moves. Details surrounding these events are not given in [Revelation 19:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11ff&t=NKJV); such is not only unnecessary but it would be out of place.

God has outlined *all the details* in connection with His Son’s return and subsequent events as set forth in [Revelation 19:11-20:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11-20.6&t=NKJV) in *preceding sections of Scripture*, beginning with *the writings of Moses* and continuing through *the historical books, the Psalms, and the Prophets*; and when one progressively reads through the Scriptures, eventually arriving at [Revelation 19:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11ff&t=NKJV), *all the details have already been made known*. The hundreds and hundreds of pages leading up to [Revelation 19:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11ff&t=NKJV) anticipate that which is stated in these verses; and at this point in Scripture there is no need for anything beyond brief, concise statements concerning the realization of all the preceding great prophecies of Scripture.

In this respect, the ever-present controversy in Christian circles concerning the literal nature of or the time of the fulfillment of portions of [Revelation 19:11-20:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11-20.6&t=NKJV) is of no moment, for all such controversy invariably stems from attempts to understand this section of Scripture apart from preceding Scripture. *And this is simply not possible, for this is not the way in which God structured His Word.*

Should an individual, for example, want to raise questions concerning the Messianic Era seen in [Revelation 20:2-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.2-7&t=NKJV), questioning *the literality of the thousand years* mentioned six times in these six verses (as so many do), he *must* go back to the writings of “Moses and all the prophets” and raise questions concerning that which is stated about the one thousand years *in these sections of Scripture first.*

But not a single one of these individuals ever does this, for they can’t do this and continue to raise the negative type of questions that are being asked concerning the one thousand years in [Revelation 20:2-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.2-7&t=NKJV). *Beginning at Moses*, in this realm of study, would result in a correction of all false ideology on the subject and dispel any doubts concerning either the literal nature of or the time of the fulfillment of the one thousand years in Revelation chapter twenty.

The pattern that God uses to restore a ruined creation has forever been set forth in the opening verses of Genesis ([Genesis 1:2-2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2-2.3&t=NKJV) [2b]). God worked six days and rested the seventh in the original restoration (made necessary because of the ruin resulting from Satan’s fall), and He will work six more days and rest the seventh in a restoration during Man’s Day (made necessary because of the ruin resulting from man’s fall). Each day in the latter restoration is one thousand years in length ([2 Peter 3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.8&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Exodus 31:12-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+31.12-17&t=NKJV)), providing six thousand years of work, followed by one thousand years of rest.

*But, beloved, do not forget this one thing* [*lit*., ‘stop being ignorant of this one thing’], *that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

(The preceding verse from [2 Peter 3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.8&t=NKJV) appears toward the end of a book that was written in completely keeping with the septenary structure established at the beginning of Scripture. This book has a built-in septenary structure, climaxed by this explanatory verse in chapter three [[2 Peter 1:15-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.15-18&t=NKJV); [3:3-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.3-8&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Matthew 16:28-17:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.28-17.5&t=NKJV)].)

The day of rest in [Genesis 2:2-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.2-3&t=NKJV) (the seventh day) was just as literal and of the same duration as each one of the preceding six days in chapter one; and the septenary structure of Scripture, beginning in this opening section of Scripture, *demands* a literal one-thousand-year period of rest (the seventh day [the seventh millennium]) following six one-thousand-year periods of work (six days [six millennia]). And so it is with reference to all other consummative events in [Revelation 19:11-20:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11-20.6&t=NKJV).

The critics, commenting on John’s writings, *must* either base their arguments upon the writings of “*Moses and all the prophets*” or *they must refrain from comment*.

Nathaniel West, in his classic book, The Thousand Years in Both Testaments, possibly best states this parallel between the Old and New Testament Scriptures best — *a parallel that must be recognized*:

“We speak of the ‘Last Things.’ The Greek term for this is ‘*Eschata*’. . . If we study the *Eschatology* of the Old Testament, we will find the *Eschata* there identical with the *Eschata* of the New Testament and the Eschatology of both Testaments the same . . . Such is the organic and genetic character of revelation and of prophecy that if ‘the thousand years’ are not in Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, they have no right to be in John. To understand the prophets it is necessary, however, to understand the Apocalypse, and to understand the Apocalypse it is necessary to understand the prophets. The one is light to the other, and reciprocally.”

(For a fuller discussion of the septenary structure of Scripture, refer to the author’s book, in this site, [The Study of Scripture BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/the-study-of-scripture.php), chapters 2-4.)

To Receive a Kingdom

According to the parable of the pounds in [Luke 19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19&t=NKJV), Christ (“*a certain nobleman*”) returned to heaven (“*a far country*”) for one declared purpose: “*to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return*” ([Luke 19:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.12&t=NKJV)). *The time* that He will spend in heaven (2,000 years [two days]), *His present position* in heaven (seated at His Father’s right hand), and *His present ministry* in heaven (High Priest), *all anticipate the Son of Man coming into possession of the kingdom, and then returning.*

This is *the goal* toward which the entire program of God has been moving since man’s creation almost 6,000 years ago, this is *the goal* toward which everything must continue moving, and this is *the goal* that *must* ultimately be reached.

1) Time between Departure and Reception

When Christ offered to Israel the kingdom of the heavens at His first advent, *a nation existed that could move in and take the kingdom.*

The same had been true in prior years when the offer of the earthly segment of the kingdom was opened to Israel under Moses. God, through “Jacob,” had previously brought into existence a separate, distinct creation ([Isaiah 43:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+43.1&t=NKJV)); and a nation, set apart from all the other nations, had emanated from this creation. This nation had been redeemed in Egypt, with a view to the people of God being removed from Egypt and receiving an inheritance as a “*kingdom of priests*” in the land of Canaan.

Israel, however, because of disobedience, failed to realize the fullness of this inheritance. And the Jewish peoples’ disobedience eventually resulted in their being uprooted from their land and scattered among the Gentile nations.

Then, fifteen hundred years later when the heavenly segment of the kingdom was opened to the nation, the offer was spurned; and *after Christ had turned from Israel with the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to “a nation bearing the fruit of it”* (*cf*. [Matthew 13:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.1&t=NKJV); [21:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.43&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 2:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.9-10&t=NKJV)), an interval of time had to exist before the kingdom could be established.

The nation to which Christ referred in [Matthew 21:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.43&t=NKJV) was not in existence at this time; and to bring about the existence of this nation, it was necessary for God to create an entirely new entity in the human race — one separate and distinct from either Jew or Gentile.

God brought *the one new man “in Christ”* into existence to be the recipient of the offer that Israel rejected ([Ephesians 2:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.12-15&t=NKJV); [3:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-6&t=NKJV)). And, as with the old creation in Jacob, so with *the new creation “in Christ”*: a period of time had to elapse between the time when *the one new man* was brought into existence and the time when this *new man* would realize the reason for his existence. This was necessary in order to allow time for this separate, distinct entity to be built up and made ready for the task at hand.

This new man is comprised solely of Christians, taken from among both the Jews and the Gentiles. A Jew or a Gentile who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a part of this *new man*, ceasing to be a Jew or a Gentile. By and through the immersion in the Spirit, he becomes *a new creation “in Christ”* ([2 Corinthians 5:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.17&t=NKJV)). And every *new creation “in Christ”* — whether removed from the Jews or from the Gentiles — becomes part of *the same body*, which God looks upon as *one new man* ([Ephesians 2:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.13-15&t=NKJV); [3:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-6&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Galatians 6:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+6.15&t=NKJV)).

(For a fuller discussion of the “*one new man*” in the preceding respect, refer to the author’s books, [The Study of Scripture BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/the-study-of-scripture.php), Chapter 6, and [Bible One - Search for the Bride by Arlen Chitwood](file:///C:\Users\Marsha\Pat%20Groves\Documents\Pat\Biblical), Chapters 7 and 8.)

Then, *the one new man “in Christ”* has been brought into existence for particular, revealed purposes; and these purposes center on the future realization of an inheritance in heavenly places. Just as the Israelites under Moses were redeemed by and through the blood of the paschal lambs while in Egypt, Christians have been redeemed by and through the blood of the Passover Lamb while in the world; and just as the Israelites were redeemed to realize an inheritance in a land removed from Egypt (upon the earth), Christians have been redeemed to realize an inheritance in a land removed from the earth (in the heavens).

The present dispensation is the time during which God is building His Church, *the one new man*. The coming kingdom, a worldwide kingdom, will require vast numbers of rulers to exercise power and authority in all the various offices; and God is taking the time in which we presently live (two days, two thousand years — a separate dispensation) to assemble His rulers. Man is being saved today with a view to this rule, and he will appear before the judgment seat of Christ with this same end in view. Only then will the kingdom be established.

2) Present Position of the Son

Christ today is seated at the right hand of His Father on His Father’s throne, but this is a temporary position. He is to one day sit on His own throne; and in a corresponding fashion, just as Christ presently sits with His Father on His Father’s throne, Christians are destined to sit with Christ when He occupies His own throne ([Revelation 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV)).

Christ, by invitation, is seated on the throne with His Father; and, seated with His Father; He is awaiting the reception of a “*kingdom*” and the reduction of His enemies to the position of His “*footstool*.”

During the time when He is seated with His Father, the ones in a position to inherit with the Son in the coming kingdom are being extended an invitation to sit with the Son on His throne; and things are being brought into a state of readiness for the great climactic events that will terminate this dispensation. Within God’s sovereign control of affairs and purpose for the present dispensation, there is *complete, divine order*. Men and nations, in one sense of the word, are being moved as one would move pawns on a chessboard; and everything is moving on schedule.

Christ will vacate His present position with the Father at the time of [Revelation 19:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11ff&t=NKJV), anticipating the establishment of His own throne. The kingdom will have been delivered into His hands by the Father, and He will come forth as the “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*” to strike the final blow against “*the kingdom of this world*,” the “*great image*” in [Daniel 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2&t=NKJV). There will then come into existence “*a great mountain*,” *the kingdom of Christ*, which will cover “the whole earth.”

3) Present High Priestly Ministry of the Son

Christ is presently exercising the office of High Priest on behalf of Christians. He is ministering in the heavenly sanctuary, on the basis of His own blood, for Christians who sin. Christians presently reside in a body of death; they still possess the old sin nature.

And Christians, falling into sin, *must* have a High Priest to effect cleansing from their sins. The high priestly ministry of Christ is for *the heirs of the kingdom*. It has nothing at all to do with the issue of our presently possessed eternal salvation. In the camp of Israel, the ministry of the Levitical priests was for those who had *already* appropriated the blood of the paschal lambs. It was for the cleansing of a people destined to become “*a kingdom of priests*” ([Exodus 19:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.6&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Hebrews 9:1-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.1-7&t=NKJV)). And in Christendom, the work of Christ as High Priest, typified by the work of the high priest in the camp of Israel, is for the same purpose. It is for the cleansing of a people destined to be “*kings and priests*” ([Revelation 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.10&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Hebrews 9:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.11-12&t=NKJV), [24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.24&t=NKJV)).

God would have His people *clean* for both present and future purposes. According to the epistle of 1 John, *God desires to have a present reciprocal fellowship with a cleansed people*. *Cleansing* makes *fellowship possible*, and the entire matter is with a view to the return of Christ and attendant events ([1 John 1:3-2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.3-2.2&t=NKJV); *cf*. [1 John 3:6-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+3.6-9&t=NKJV); [4:16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+4.16-17&t=NKJV)).

Christians, in [1 John 2:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+2.28&t=NKJV) have been instructed:

*And now, little children, abide in Him* [*i.e.*, live in a state of continuous, close *fellowship* ‘with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ’]; *that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.*

In this respect, Christ’s high priestly ministry is *a vital present provision* for the future heirs of the kingdom.

Christ gave Himself for the Church,

*That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word,*

*that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.* ([Ephesians 5:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+5.26-27&t=NKJV))

This aspect of Christ’s present ministry is possibly best illustrated by the incident in John chapter thirteen where Christ girded Himself, took a basin of water, and began to wash the disciples’ feet ([John 13:4ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.4ff&t=NKJV)). Peter, not understanding at all the significance of that which was happening, refused to allow Christ to wash his feet. Upon his refusal, Jesus responded,

*If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.* ([John 13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.8&t=NKJV))

Then Peter, comprehending at least the gravity of the latter part of Christ’s statement, said,

*Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.* ([John 13:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.9&t=NKJV))

In other words, if a washing is what it would take in order to have a part *with* Christ, Peter didn’t want the washing limited to just his feet. Rather, he wanted his entire body washed.

However, Jesus replied,

*He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you*. ([John 13:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.10&t=NKJV))

In the Greek text of [John 13:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.8-10&t=NKJV), there are two different words used for “wash.” The word used in verse eight (in both occurrences) and in the latter part of verse ten is *nipto*, referring to “washing a part of the body”; and the word used in the first part of verse ten is *louo*, referring to “washing the complete body.” Further, the word *louo* in verse ten appears in a perfect tense, showing a past, completed action with the results of this action existing during present time in a finished state. Such an act reveals a washing that occurred in the past, with the person who was washed continuing in the present as a cleansed person on the basis of that which occurred in the past. Thus, any thought of the cleansed person undergoing another washing of this nature would be completely out of place, for he presently exists in a continuing state as *cleansed*.

Peter’s entire body had already been washed; but now, in order to have a part *with* Christ, he must avail himself of the partial washing to which Christ referred.

The entire matter is highly symbolic of a “complete washing” that Christians received in *the past* and “partial washings” that Christians receive during *the present.* The complete washing results in eternal salvation, but the partial washings are necessary if one is to have a part “*with Christ*” in His kingdom. The complete washing — viewed from the perfect tense usage of *louo* in [John 13:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.10&t=NKJV) — is a one-time, past occurrence, which can never be repeated. But the partial washings, set forth by the word *nipto*, are something else altogether. Subsequent partial washings have to do with a present, continuing cleansing made possible because of the one-time, past cleansing.

On the basis of the past, finished work of Christ, redeemed man has been saved *by grace through faith*. In [Ephesians 2:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8&t=NKJV), the words “*are you saved* [*lit*. ‘you have been saved’]” are the translation of a perfect tense in the Greek text, the same as the word *louo* in [John 13:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.10&t=NKJV).

Redeemed man possesses a salvation, based on a past, completed act (Christ’s work on Calvary), which presently exists in a finished state. Everything has already been done on his behalf. He had nothing whatsoever to do with the matter simply because there was nothing that he could do.

He was “*dead in trespasses and sins*,” completely incapable of doing anything in the spiritual realm ([Ephesians 2:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.1ff&t=NKJV)).

He has been washed completely (*louo*) by Another, and presently stands justified before God. This is an act performed once. It can *never* be altered or nullified. It is just as secure as the finished work of Christ on Calvary, for it is based entirely upon this work; and Christ, in [John 19:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.30&t=NKJV), said of His work, “*It is finished* [*lit*. ‘It has been finished’ (another perfect tense usage in the Greek text)].”

Teachings in the realm of complete and partial washings, as set forth in [John 13:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.8-10&t=NKJV), are drawn from the experiences of the Levitical priests in the camp of Israel. Upon their entrance into the priesthood, a washing of the entire body occurred ([Exodus 29:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+29.4&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Exodus 40:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+40.12-15&t=NKJV)); then, after they had entered the priesthood, washings of parts of the body had to occur ([Exodus 30:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+30.21&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Exodus 40:30-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+40.30-32&t=NKJV)).

The Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament) uses the words *louo* and *nipto* respectively in these passages, in perfect accord with [John 13:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.8-10&t=NKJV) and corresponding teachings throughout Scripture relative to complete and partial washings of the people of God. The hands and feet of the Levitical priests became soiled in their ministry between the brazen altar and the Holy Place of the tabernacle, and a necessary cleansing occurred at a brazen laver in the courtyard.

This laver was located part way between the brazen altar and the Holy Place and had upper and lower basins filled with water to wash the hands and feet of the priests. Levitical priests, carrying on their ministries, had to wash these parts of their bodies before ministering at the brazen altar and before their entrance into the Holy Place. This is the partial washings in the type and the partial washings in view in [John 13:8-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.8-10&t=NKJV).

The washing of parts of the bodies of the Old Testament Levitical priests is highly typical of the relationship that Christ, in His high priestly ministry, has to New Testament priests (Christians). This is the teaching brought out in [1 John 1:6-2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.6-2.2&t=NKJV); and these verses must be understood in the light of the Old Testament type, also taking into account events occurring on the Day of Atonement when the high priest placed blood on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies (*cf*. [Hebrews 9:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.1ff&t=NKJV)).

A Christian *walking “in the light”* ([1 John 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.7&t=NKJV)) is one who has availed himself of the antitype of cleansing at the laver. Cleansing occurs as we confess our sins, on the basis of Christ’s blood on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies of the heavenly tabernacle ([1 John 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.9&t=NKJV); *cf*. [1 John 2:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+2.1-2&t=NKJV)). The cleansed person is able to “*walk in the light*” (in the Holy Place) and have “*fellowship . . . with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ*.” The Christian *walking “in darkness”* ([1 John 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.6&t=NKJV)) though is one who has not availed himself of the antitype of cleansing at the laver. He remains in the darkened courtyard outside the Holy Place. He remains on the wrong side of the laver, leaving him estranged from the experience of “fellowship.”

Christians have a “*great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God*” ([Hebrews 4:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.14&t=NKJV)); and if Christians would have a part *with* Christ in that coming day, they *must* avail themselves of His present high priestly ministry. They *must* allow Christ to wash their feet; they *must* avail themselves of the laver; they *must* keep themselves clean through confession of sin.

And to Return

Christ’s departure to receive a kingdom *would hold little meaning* apart from His return. The kingdom has to do with a rule of God’s firstborn Sons, realizing the rights of primogeniture; it has to do with a rule on and over this earth; and it has to do with the personal presence of Christ and His co-heirs. There is no such thing as either a rule during the present day or a future rule in some far off heaven fulfilling any of the biblical prophecies concerning the kingdom of Christ, which is to replace the kingdom of this world.

1) Christ’s Termination of His present ministry

Christ’s present ministry is being performed strictly on behalf of sinning Christians; and once Christians have been removed from the earth to appear before the judgment seat, Christ will then perform another work. He will, at that time, no longer be the Christians’ *High Priest.* Rather, He will be their *Judge*.

The epistle of First John begins with the high priestly ministry of Christ during the present time, but the book of Revelation moves beyond this point and begins with judgment following Christ’s present high priestly ministry. And Christ’s continuing ministry in the latter respect (as Judge) will have its basis in the former (His present ministry as High Priest).

There can be no future judgment for Christians relative to anything that surrounds their eternal salvation, for *God has already judged sin in the person of His Son at Calvary; and God is satisfied with His Son’s finished work.*

To ever bring anything related to man’s eternal salvation into judgment (beyond Calvary) would be to judge once again that which has already been judged. Thus, the judgment seat of Christ can be operable in *one realm alone* — that which occurred in the life of the individual following his passing “*from death to life*.”

And whether or not Christians avail themselves of Christ’s ministry in the sanctuary during the present dispensation — a ministry solely on behalf of sinning Christians — will have a direct bearing on issues and determinations emanating from the judgment seat.

Christ is presently providing a cleansing from the defilement of this world for those destined to be “*kings and priests*” during the coming age. A present washing (described by the word *nipto*) is being provided for those who have already been washed (described by the word *louo*). Since the latter washing is not in view at all in the work of Christ as High Priest, only the former can have any bearing on decisions and determinations after Christ assumes His role as Judge.

A washing of the entire body (effecting his eternal salvation) places one in a position where he can enter into the experiences set forth in the epistle of 1 John; and it is the manner in which he enters into these experiences alone that find their association with Christ appearing as Judge in the midst of the seven churches in Revelation chapter one.

The words, “*For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*” ([1 Corinthians 11:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+11.31&t=NKJV)), set forth truths concerning Christ as both High Priest and Judge. The immediate context of this passage in 1 Corinthians refers to Christians either judging or not judging themselves relative to partaking of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner ([1 Corinthians 11:17-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+11.17-29&t=NKJV)).

Those judging themselves in Corinth had been forgiven of their actions; they had been cleansed by their High Priest. Those, however, refusing to judge themselves remained defiled; and only judgment by Another could then occur. Many of the defiled were “*weak and sickly*,” and many had “*died*” ([1 Corinthians 11:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+11.30&t=NKJV)). Judgment by Another had resulted in *loss*, and the ultimate result was *a loss of life*.

In the larger scope of the matter, this is exactly what is in view relative to Christians either judging themselves during the present dispensation or being judged by Another at the conclusion of the dispensation.

Christians who judge themselves now will be cleansed by their High Priest. Those, however, who refuse to judge themselves will remain defiled; and only judgment by Another awaits them. Judgment by Another will result in *loss* ([1 Corinthians 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.15&t=NKJV)), and the ultimate result will be *the loss of one’s soul/life* ([Matthew 16:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.25-27&t=NKJV); [James 5:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+5.19-20&t=NKJV)).

2) Christ’s Entrance upon His Future Ministry

Christ’s return as “*King of king and Lord of lords*” portends many *kings* and many *lords*. Christ will rule in the supreme position *over all* from His own throne in the heavenly Jerusalem and from David’s throne in the earthly Jerusalem. Under Christ there will be a complete structural breakdown of powers and authorities in both spheres of the kingdom — *in the heavens* and *upon the earth*. Christ will be “King,” and there will be other “kings”; Christ will be “Lord,” and there will be other “lords.”

Those in the heavens will evidently rule through counterparts upon the earth. This is the way God has seen fit to establish the heavenly and earthly spheres of the present kingdom under Satan, and there is no reason to believe that the coming kingdom under Christ will be established after any other fashion.

God’s rule in the present kingdom begins at His throne in the “*uttermost parts of the north*” ([Isaiah 14:13, ASV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.13&t=ASV)). It then *progresses* to the earth *through* the existing kingdom of the heavens under Satan. “*The heavens do rule*”; and God, in His sovereignty (even with Satan in his present fallen and rebellious state), “*rules in the kingdom of men*” after this fashion ([Daniel 4:25-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+4.25-26&t=NKJV)).

In Daniel, chapter ten, God provides a glimpse into the way rulers have been positioned in the present heavenly and earthly spheres of the kingdom. Daniel had been “mourning” for three full weeks when a messenger from heaven appeared. This messenger had been dispatched at the very outset of Daniel’s “mourning,” but he had been detained for twenty-one days in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom by “*the prince of the kingdom of Persia*.” Michael came to assist, and the messenger remained in the heavens with “*the kings of Persia*” until he was free to resume his journey on to the earth ([Daniel 10:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.2&t=NKJV), [12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.12-13&t=NKJV)).

In the heavens, there was a “*prince of the kingdom of Persia*,” with lesser rulers under him — “*the kings of Persia*.” And here upon the earth, there was also a king of Persia, with lesser rulers under him.

Rulers in the heavens possessed counterparts upon the earth, and the complete rule of the heavens over the earth began at God’s throne and progressed from there through the heavenly sphere of the earth’s kingdom to the earthly sphere of the earth’s kingdom (even though progressing through rebel princes in the heavens, and continuing through fallen man on the earth). In relation to the earth, God, in His sovereign control of all things, ruled in this manner in the past; and He continues to rule in this same manner today.

The “*prince of Greece*” and “*Michael your prince* [the prince of Israel]” are also mentioned in this same passage in Daniel ([Daniel 10:20-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.20-21&t=NKJV)). And this reveals a sharp difference in the existing heavenly governmental rulers placed over the Gentile nations on the one hand and Israel on the other.

The heavenly governmental rulers placed over the Gentile nations are revealed to be Satan and his angels. But the heavenly governmental ruler (or rulers) placed over Israel, a people *not* to be “*reckoned among the nations* [Gentile nations]” ([Numbers 23:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+23.9&t=NKJV); [Deuteronomy 14:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+14.2&t=NKJV)), has been established *apart* from the rule of Satan and his angels.

“Michael” is *Israel’s prince* (*with apparently lesser princes under him, as seen among the Gentile nations’ heavenly governmental structure*); and Michael (along with any lesser princes) does not rule in the present kingdom of the heavens under Satan. Thus, any existing heavenly government associated with Israel’s earthly government must emanate from that part of the heavens where Michael dwells, not from that part of the heavens where Satan dwells.

(Note that the preceding structure of Israel’s government was necessary for the existence of the Old Testament theocracy. God ruled in the midst of His people on earth, and God could not have ruled in the midst of a nation that was, as well, under Satan’s governmental control and sway.)

God rules in “*the kingdom of men*” in this manner. And, though Satan has been allowed to continue occupying the throne for a time, and fallen man has been allowed to rule on earth (under Satan) for a time, *all matters pertaining to the earth’s government still remain under God’s complete sovereign control.*

In the coming kingdom of Christ, a marked distinction between Israel and the Gentile nations will continue to exist, both upon the earth and in the heavens.

Upon the earth, Israel will be placed at the head of the nations as a “*kingdom of priests*.” Israel will bear rule over the nations, and the nations will be blessed through Israel ([Genesis 12:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.1-3&t=NKJV); [22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV); [Exodus 19:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.6&t=NKJV); [Deuteronomy 15:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+15.6&t=NKJV); [28:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+28.1&t=NKJV)).

In the heavens, it seems apparent that there will be a marked distinction between rulers associated with *Israel* and rulers associated with *the Gentile nations*. Individuals during the present dispensation, with the exception of the twelve apostles, have been promised positions of power and authority only over the Gentiles, never over Israel.

According to Christ’s words recorded in [Matthew 19:27-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+19.27-28&t=NKJV), addressing Peter’s question, the twelve disciples (Judas being replaced) are to sit upon twelve thrones judging *the twelve tribes of Israel*:

*Then Peter answered and said to Him, “See, we have left all, and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?”*

*So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit, on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

But all other Christians, according to the overcomer’s promise to the Church in Sardis, in [Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV), possess a regal promise associated *only with the Gentile nations*:

*And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—*

*He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels—as I also have received from My Father.*

Note also in [Revelation 15:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+15.2-4&t=NKJV) that Tribulation martyrs will evidently bear rule only over the Gentile nations as well, referred to by their position in relation to “*the sea of glass*,” with the victor’s song on the eastern banks of the Red Sea from Exodus chapter fifteen in view (with “*the sea*” in both instances pointing to *the Gentiles* [*cf*. [Revelation 7:9-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+7.9-17&t=NKJV); [20:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4-6&t=NKJV)]).

Who then, other than the twelve, will comprise the rulers placed over Israel in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom? Scripture doesn’t say, but these positions will, in all likelihood, be occupied by Old Testament saints who qualified to rule from the heavens.

Numerous Old Testament saints sought “*a better country, that is, a heavenly country*” ([Hebrews 11:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.16&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Matthew 8:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+8.11-12&t=NKJV); [Luke 13:28-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+13.28-29&t=NKJV)); and the fact that Israel spurned this offer at Christ’s first coming (resulting in the kingdom of the heavens being taken from Israel) can have no bearing on the previous actions of many Israelites who, during Old Testament days, qualified to occupy positions therein. These Old Testament saints will not be denied their promised inheritance, and will, in all probability, occupy positions in the heavens over Israel rather than over the Gentile nations.

In this respect, there will be two segments in the heavenly kingdom under Christ, corresponding to the two segments in the earthly kingdom under Christ, *i.e*., one in relation to the nation of Israel and the other in relation to the Gentile nations.

*A rule* by man during the coming age will emanate from Jerusalem above and from Jerusalem below. Christ will have a joint-reign, seated on His own throne in the heavenly Jerusalem and seated on David’s throne in the earthly Jerusalem.

Then there is the matter of David himself being raised up to sit on his own throne in the midst of his people, Israel, along with the greater Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ (*cf*. [Ezekiel 34:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+34.23&t=NKJV); [37:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+37.24&t=NKJV); [Luke 1:31-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+1.31-33&t=NKJV); [Acts 2:29-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+2.29-30&t=NKJV)). David, as Christ, may very well have a dual reign, both from the heavens and upon the earth (*cf*. [Matthew 8:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+8.11-12&t=NKJV); [Luke 13:28-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+13.28-29&t=NKJV)).

Then note that those comprising the man-child in Revelation chapter twelve — the 144,000 of Revelation chapters seven and fourteen — are specifically said to exercise regal power over *the Gentile nations* rather than over Israel:

She [the woman, Israel] *bore a male child, who was to rule* [*lit*., ‘a son, a male, who is about to rule’] *all nations with a rod of iron* . . . . ([Revelation 12:5a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.5a&t=NKJV))

(For additional information on the male child/the 144,000 in [Revelation 7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+7&t=NKJV); [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12&t=NKJV); [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+14&t=NKJV), refer to the author’s book, in this site, [The Time of the End BOOK](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-in-revelation.php#The%20Time%20of%20the%20End), Chapters 21 and 26, “A Woman, a Dragon, a Man-Child” and “The One Hundred Forty-Four Thousand.”)

There will be numerous positions of power and authority in the kingdom under Christ, both in the heavens and upon the earth. And the whole of the kingdom will be perfect in its God-designed order and structure.

Concluding Thoughts:

The day is near at hand when “*He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.*” Christians, as they exercise “*patience* [‘patient endurance’ in the trials and testing of life during the present time],” performing “*the will of God*,” are to retain their “*confidence*” in “*the promise*” of a “*great recompense of reward*” ([Hebrews 10:35-37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.35-37&t=NKJV)). Rewards for *faithful* Christians will issue from findings and determinations at the judgment seat, and these rewards will be realized in their fullness during that coming day.

*Many sons* will be brought “*to glory*” ([Hebrews 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.10&t=NKJV)), and these sons will reign as “*kings*” with the “*King of kings*.” They will occupy the throne with Christ and, with Him, realize the rights of the firstborn, the rights of primogeniture.

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Chapter 14

**A Rod of Iron**

*Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing?*

*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,*

*“Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.”*

*He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision.*

*Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure:*

*“Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.”*

*I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son; Today I have begotten You.*

*Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.*

*You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’”* ([Psalm 2:1-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.1-9&t=NKJV))

The scene in the second Psalm depicts the final thrust and end of Gentile world power, followed by Christ’s rule over the earth. Events in [Psalm 2:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.1ff&t=NKJV) parallel events in [Revelation 19:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11ff&t=NKJV). There is, however, a near and a far fulfillment of [Psalm 2:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.1-3&t=NKJV).

The near fulfillment occurred at Christ’s first coming, in connection with *His sufferings and humiliation* ([Acts 4:23-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+4.23-28&t=NKJV)); and the far fulfillment will occur at Christ’s second coming, in connection with *His glory and exaltation* ([Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV); [19:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.15&t=NKJV)).

The final thrust of Gentile world power under Satan will be against the “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*” Himself. *Gentile world power will be reduced to naught, the scepter will change hands, and God’s Son will then reign supreme and rule the earth in righteousness with a rod of iron.*

Times . . . Fullness of the Gentiles

The day in which we presently live is known in Scripture as “*the times of the Gentiles*.” This expression simply refers to that period during which Gentile nations hold the scepter. This period began with the conquest of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar over twenty-six hundred years ago (605 B.C.), and it will end following a future conquest of Jerusalem under the Antichrist. And Jerusalem, in that future day, is to be “*trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*” ([Luke 21:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+21.24&t=NKJV)).

This action by the Gentile nations has to do with a final treading under foot during the rule of Antichrist; and according to [Matthew 24:15-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.15-26&t=NKJV) (which parallels [Luke 21:20-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+21.20-24&t=NKJV)) and [Revelation 11:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.2&t=NKJV), this will occur during the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation. Christ will then return and bring an end to Gentile world supremacy.

“*The fullness of the Gentiles*” ([Romans 11:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.25&t=NKJV)), on the other hand, is an expression referring to a work of God among *the Gentiles* during a part of the period known as “*the times of the Gentiles*.” This activity involves God turning His attention to the Gentiles “*to take out of them a people for His name*” ([Acts 15:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+15.14&t=NKJV)).

Contextually in Romans chapter eleven, the time during which God brings this to pass is following Israel’s unbelief and rejection at Christ’s first coming — over six hundred years after the beginning of “*the times of the Gentiles*.” And by comparing the same context with related Scripture, it is clear that “*the fullness of the Gentiles*” covers the complete period extending from the time of Israel’s unbelief and rejection at Christ’s first coming to the time of Israel’s belief and acceptance at His second coming, which would cover time throughout both *the present dispensation* and *the future Tribulation*.

God brings “*the fullness of the Gentiles*” to pass during the present dispensation by placing believing Gentiles together in the same body with believing Jews, forming *the one new man “in Christ”* ([Romans 11:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.5&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.11&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.20&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Ephesians 2:12-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.12-15&t=NKJV); [3:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-6&t=NKJV)). During the present dispensation, the Spirit of God is in the world searching for a bride for God’s Son who will reign as consort queen with Him during the Messianic Era. And the bride is being taken from *the one new man “in Christ,”* made up mainly of individuals removed from the Gentiles rather than from the Jews (though individuals removed from the Jews are included).

Then, following *the one new man’s* removal from the earth at the end of the dispensation (the resurrection and rapture of Christians), numerous Gentiles will be saved during the Tribulation. And, though they will not form part of the bride of Christ, many from this group will hold regal positions in the kingdom as well (*cf*. [Matthew 25:31-46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.31-46&t=NKJV); [Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV); [6:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+6.9-11&t=NKJV); [7:9-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+7.9-17&t=NKJV); [20:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4-6&t=NKJV)).

The vast multitude of Gentiles saved during the Tribulation — mainly through the ministry of 144,000 Jewish evangels during the last three and one-half years — will complete “*the fullness of the Gentiles*”; and the armies under Antichrist will constitute the final thrust of Gentile supremacy during “*the times of the Gentiles*.”

The period during which God removes from the Gentiles “*a people for His name*” (effecting “*the fullness of the Gentiles*”), and the period known as “*the times of the Gentiles*” (during which Gentiles, because of Israel’s disobedience, hold the scepter), will both end at the same time — with Christ’s return. The return of Christ will immediately follow “*the fullness of the Gentiles*” being realized ([Romans 11:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.26&t=NKJV); [Acts 15:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+15.16&t=NKJV)); and the return of Christ will, as well, through the destruction of Gentile world power, bring an end to “*the times of the Gentiles*.”

God’s removal of “*a people for His name*,” from among the Gentiles, is for purposes involving *the government of the earth,* to be realized *following “the times of the Gentiles.”* That is, during the concluding two millennia of Gentile supremacy under Satan, God has been removing from the Gentiles “*a people for His name*” to exercise supremacy over the nations during the coming age.

The reason for man’s very existence upon the earth involves *dominion over the earth*. *Adam* was brought into existence for this purpose ([Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV)), *Israel* was brought into existence for this purpose ([Exodus 4:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.22-23&t=NKJV)), and *the Church* was brought into existence for this same purpose ([Hebrew 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrew+2.10&t=NKJV)).

Because of Israel’s disobedience and unbelief, “*the times of the Gentiles*” and “*the fullness of the Gentiles*” were both made necessary. Israel’s disobedience during the days of the Old Testament theocracy led to the nation being uprooted and dispersed among the Gentile nations, beginning “*the times of the Gentiles*”; and Israel’s rejection and unbelief surrounding their Messiah and the offer of the kingdom of the heavens at Christ’s first coming led to the setting aside of the nation, anticipating God’s removal of “*a people for His name*” from among the Gentiles.

The present exercise of Gentile supremacy (“*the times of the Gentiles*”) is simply a rule by fallen man under Satan that can last only until God has accomplished His purpose for Man’s Day (in which “*the fullness of the Gentiles*” will occur). The length of the period during which Gentiles will be allowed to exercise supremacy is shown by Nebuchadnezzar’s image in Daniel chapter two. Gentile power, depicted by the image, came into existence during the days of Nebuchadnezzar; and it will pass out of existence during the days of Antichrist ([Daniel 2:31-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.31-45&t=NKJV); cf. [Daniel 7:1-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.1-14&t=NKJV); [8:1-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+8.1-25&t=NKJV)).

That which is depicted by the image in Daniel chapter two came into existence because of *the disobedience* of God’s firstborn son, Israel; and that which is depicted by this image will one day pass out of existence by and through *the action* of God’s firstborn Son, Jesus.

The image is seen smitten in its final form by Christ at the time of His return, bringing an end to Gentile supremacy and opening the way for God’s firstborn sons (*three firstborn Sons* in that day — Jesus, the Church, and Israel) to exercise the rights of primogeniture.

With this in mind, it should be noted that there is possibly nothing more out of place in the world today than Christians becoming involved with the present Gentile governmental system under Satan. Christians comprise *a separate, distinct creation*; they comprise *the one new man*, called into existence to participate in *a government under Christ during the coming age, after the present system under Satan has been destroyed*. And they are to fix their attention on that future day, *following “the times of the Gentiles.”* They are to pray for and be subject to incumbent rulers ([Romans 13:1-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+13.1-7&t=NKJV); [1 Timothy 2:1-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+2.1-3&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 2:13-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.13-17&t=NKJV)), but they are not themselves to hold the scepter during the present day and time ([1 Corinthians 4:2-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+4.2-5&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 2:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.4-5&t=NKJV)).

Removed From, Positioned In

The Gentile nations, although they have been allowed to rule the earth under Satan throughout “*the times of the Gentiles*,” are, in one sense of the word, not in a position to rule. Christ’s future rule, Israel’s future rule, and the future rule of the Church all center on exercising *the rights belonging to the firstborn*; and Gentile nations are in no position to exercise these rights. The Gentiles are “*aliens from the commonwealth* [Greek: *politeia*, ‘citizenship,’ ‘political activity’] *of Israel*” ([Ephesians 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.12&t=NKJV)). *They possess no birthright*.

(The Greek word *politeia* in [Ephesians 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.12&t=NKJV) is a cognate form of the word *politikos*, from which the English word “politics” is derived. Note the use of *politeuma*, another cognate form of the same word, with the same basic meaning, in [Philippians 3:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+3.20&t=NKJV):

*“For our citizenship* [KJV: conversation — *politeuma*, ‘political sphere of activity’— *is in heaven* [‘heavens’], *from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*)

The rights of the firstborn, the “birthright,” has to do with *firstborn sons*. Israel’s standing as “firstborn” while still in Egypt during the days of Moses ([Exodus 4:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.22&t=NKJV)) placed this nation in an entirely different standing to that which was held by any Gentile nation. Israel had been adopted, and no Gentile nation has ever entered or will ever enter into this experience ([Romans 9:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+9.4&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Psalm 147:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+147.19-20&t=NKJV)).

Gentile nations were to be ruled by *the one nation* in possession of the rights of primogeniture. Gentile nations themselves were not to rule, for they did not possess primogenital rights. And their present rule, although allowed by God, is something that must end, *if for no other reason* than the alienated position occupied by the nations. The scepter *must* ultimately be delivered into the hands of those in a position to exercise the rights of primogeniture. Only then will God bestow His full blessings upon mankind in accordance with [Genesis 12:2-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.2-3&t=NKJV); [22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV).

This is the reason for the existence of *the nation of Israel* and the bringing into existence of *the one new man “in Christ.”* Israel awaits her blindness being lifted *after* God completes His work with respect to “*the fullness of the Gentiles*” ([Romans 11:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.26&t=NKJV)); and God taking out of the Gentiles “*a people for His name*” will bring into existence, following the adoption ([Romans 8:23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.23&t=NKJV)), a second segment of mankind placed in a position to exercise the rights of primogeniture. Israel, still retaining her standing as *firstborn*, will exercise these rights upon earth (following the nation’s repentance and conversion); and the Church, coming into the position of *firstborn* (following the adoption), will exercise these rights from the heavens over the earth.

God is presently in the process of accomplishing a work that will result in “*many sons*” being brought “*to glory*” ([Hebrew 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrew+2.10&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Romans 8:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.18-19&t=NKJV)). These “sons” are mainly individuals being removed from the nations presently holding the scepter, with a view to these sons one day holding the scepter. The immersion in the Spirit of those believing on the Lord Jesus Christ places them “*in Christ*,” a part of *the one new man*. And because they are positionally “*in Christ*” (who is Abraham’s Seed), this allows God to recognize them as “*Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*” (*cf*. [Romans 4:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+4.13&t=NKJV); [Galatians 3:26-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.26-29&t=NKJV)).

Then there is also the “*remnant according to the election of grace*” ([Romans 11:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.5&t=NKJV)), consisting of believing Jews who avail themselves of the redemption which is “*in Christ*.” And, by and through this same immersion in the Spirit, believing Jews find themselves in exactly the same position as believing Gentiles — a part of *the one new man*, becoming “*fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel*” ([Ephesians 3:1-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.1-6&t=NKJV)).

Believing Gentiles are being removed from the nations of the earth, and believing Jews are being removed from the nation of Israel. Individuals from both groups relinquish their national identities, becoming *new creations “in Christ,”* part of *the one new man* ([2 Corinthians 5:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.17&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.11-15&t=NKJV)).

Believing Gentiles come into possession of a calling, *a heavenly calling*; and believing Jews relinquish their *earthly calling* and come into possession of a higher calling, *a heavenly calling*. These individuals are being removed from the nations of the earth and from the nation of Israel respectively, with a view to being positioned *in heavenly places during the coming age*. Those occupying such positions will sit with Christ on His throne and, in this capacity, *rule the nations with a rod of iron, as co-heirs with Christ* (*cf*. [Romans 8:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.17&t=NKJV); [Revelation 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV)).

The Birthright; The Throne

In Jewish history, the birthright belonged to the firstborn son in a family, simply by right of birth, and consisted of three things:

1) *Ruler* of the household under and for the father.

2) *Priest* of the family.

3) The reception of *a double portion* of all the father’s goods.

Although a firstborn son did nothing whatsoever to come into possession of the birthright, he could conduct his life in such a manner so as to forfeit the birthright. He could not forfeit *his position* *as firstborn* in the family, but he could forfeit *the rights of the firstborn*.

There are two classic examples in the Old Testament of firstborn sons relinquishing the rights of primogeniture (birthright of the firstborn). One is *Esau, the firstborn son of Isaac*; and the other is *Reuben, the firstborn son of Jacob*.

*Esau* considered the birthright of little value and sold his rights as firstborn to his younger brother, Jacob, to satisfy a fleshly gratification ([Genesis 25:27-34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25.27-34&t=NKJV)). *Reuben*, on the other hand, forfeited his birthright through sexual promiscuity ([Genesis 35:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+35.22&t=NKJV); [49:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+49.3-4&t=NKJV)). In Esau’s case, the entire birthright was given to Jacob; but in Reuben’s case, the birthright was divided among three of his brothers. *The regal portion* was given to Judah, *the priestly portion* was given to Levi, and *the double portion of the father’s goods* was given to Joseph (to be realized through his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh).

All historic events recorded in the Old Testament occurred within God’s sovereign control of all things “*as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come*.” (*cf*. [Luke 24:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.25-27&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 10:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+10.6&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+10.11&t=NKJV)).

That is, God, within His sovereignty, brought all these things to pass so that He might have the experiences of various individuals to draw upon in order to teach Christians the deep things of God. Nothing occurred haphazardly, for *God does not draw spiritual lessons from haphazard experiences.*

The recorded accounts of Esau and Reuben constitute types of firstborn sons forfeiting their birthright; and further, the forfeiture by Esau constitutes the final warning in the book of Hebrews, a warning directed to Christians concerning the possibility that they too can forfeit their birthright.

Every Christian is an heir, as Esau and Reuben; but also, as Esau and Reuben, not every Christian will inherit the rights of the firstborn.

Every Christian is in line to one day, following the adoption, realize the rights belonging to the firstborn. But the fact remains that any Christian can, as Esau and Reuben, forfeit these rights. Any Christian can be overcome during the present dispensation, resulting in his being denied a position on the throne as co-heir with Christ during the coming dispensation.

Co-heirs with Christ are to be “*kings and priests*” ([Revelation 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.10&t=NKJV)); and they are to realize, with Christ, a double portion of all the Father’s goods. The Father has given *all that He has* to the Son ([Genesis 24:36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+24.36&t=NKJV); [25:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25.5&t=NKJV); [John 16:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+16.15&t=NKJV)), and the double portion to be possessed by Christ and His co-heirs consists of both spheres of the kingdom (*heavenly* and *earthly*). The Father’s house, with respect to the birthright, has to do with a worldwide kingdom ruled *from the heavens*.

The blessings in store for Christians are *heavenly*, but these blessings will include *an earthly* “inheritance” and “possession” as well. Christians, as co-heirs with Christ, will enter into that which has been promised to the Son in connection with His rule over the earth. And God has promised His Son “*the nations* [Gentiles]” for *His inheritance* and the “*ends of the earth*” for *His possession* ([Psalm 2:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.6&t=NKJV), [8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.8&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV)).

This earthly *inheritance* and *possession* — completely separate from Israel’s earthly blessings and inheritance — is associated with “*the kingdom of the world* [present world kingdom under Satan]” which will become “*the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ* [future world kingdom under Christ]” ([Revelation 11:15, ASV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.15&t=ASV)).

There is an interesting, often overlooked parallel between *the five warnings* in the book of Hebrews and *the seven overcomer’s promises* in the book of Revelation. The warnings and the overcomer’s promises both have the same end in view. The last warning has to do with *the birthright* ([Hebrew 12:14-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrew+12.14-17&t=NKJV)), and the last overcomer’s promise has to do with *the throne* ([Revelation 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV)).

The successive thought in the warnings in the book of Hebrews is that of Christians ultimately realizing their birthright — *sons exercising the rights of primogeniture*. The great burden of Hebrews, in this respect, is that of “*bringing many sons to glory*” ([Hebrew 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrew+2.10&t=NKJV)).

And the successive thought in the overcomer’s promises in the book of Revelation is that of Christians ultimately ascending the throne — *as co-heirs, companions, exercising power with Christ*. And the great burden of Revelation chapters two and three, in this respect, is that of placing equipped Christians (as *sons*, seen in Hebrews) upon the throne with Christ.

Absolute Power and Authority

Christ will rule the nations with “*a rod of iron*,” and He has promised His co-heirs that they will exercise this power and authority with Him ([Psalm 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.9&t=NKJV); [Revelation 2:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-27&t=NKJV); [12:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.5&t=NKJV); [19:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.15&t=NKJV)).

The words “*break them with a rod of iron*” rather than “*rule them with a rod of iron*” (as in [Revelation 2:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.27&t=NKJV); [12:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.5&t=NKJV); [19:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.15&t=NKJV)) are used in [Psalm 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.9&t=NKJV). The Hebrew word translated “break” in this passage, contextually, refers *to absolute force* that will be used to bring and keep the nations under subjection to the “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*.” A cognate form of this word appears in [Daniel 2:40](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.40&t=NKJV) where, contextually, the word refers to a similar (but not absolute) force that will be used by Antichrist to bring and keep the nations under subjection to him during the Tribulation. The words “*broken to pieces*” and “*break in pieces*” in [Daniel 2:35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.35&t=NKJV), [44-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.44-45&t=NKJV) are the translations of a different word though, which, by comparing [Psalm 2:1-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.1-9&t=NKJV), has to do with *the absolute, total destruction* of the kingdom of Antichrist by Christ at the end of the Tribulation; and this will be followed by *Christ’s absolute control* over the nations during the succeeding Messianic Era, when the “*great mountain*” (Christ’s kingdom) *fills “the whole earth”* ([Daniel 2:35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.35&t=NKJV)).

The Greek word translated “rule” in [Revelation 2:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.27&t=NKJV); [12:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.5&t=NKJV); [19:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.15&t=NKJV) means *to shepherd*. This is the same word translated “*feed* [*lit*. shepherd (referring to *shepherding the flock of God*)]” in [Acts 20:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+20.28&t=NKJV) and [1 Peter 5:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.2&t=NKJV). The thought behind this word when used in the sense of “rule” can possibly best be seen by its use in [Matthew 2:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+2.6&t=NKJV):

*But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel*. ([Matthew 2:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+2.6&t=NKJV))

The Ruler, in this respect, will be a *Shepherd* over the nations; and His co-heirs will exhibit like qualities.

However, this shepherding will be accomplished through *absolute force*. There will be no such thing as a toleration of disobedience among the Gentile nations in that day (*cf*. [Psalm 101:1-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+101.1-8&t=NKJV); [Isaiah 66:19-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+66.19-24&t=NKJV); [Zechariah 14:16-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zechariah+14.16-21&t=NKJV)). The shepherding will be carried out by and through the use of authority described as “*a rod* [scepter] *of iron*.”

A shepherd in Israel during Old Testament days possessed *a wooden* *staff*; but the Chief Shepherd and His co-heirs during that coming day will wield a *staff of iron*. And with this staff, the Gentile nations, as “the vessels of a potter” when struck, will be “broken to pieces.”

Note that these same words are used relative to both the rule of Christ in [Psalm 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+2.9&t=NKJV) and the rule of His co-heirs in [Revelation 2:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.27&t=NKJV). The rule by both Christ and His co-heirs will, in this respect, be identical in nature.

Duration of Power and Authority

Scripture teaches that the exercise of governmental power and authority by Christ and His co-heirs will not end when the 1,000-year millennial day has run its course. Rather, the exercise of such power and authority will extend into and last throughout the eternal ages beyond the Millennium. But Scripture does *not* teach that this rule will continue *unchanged* into these eternal ages. To the contrary, Scripture teaches just the opposite. The rule by Christ and His co-heirs during the ages beyond the Millennium will be *quite different* than their rule during the Millennium.

*First*, there is the matter of Christ’s throne. His throne is *eternal*, but not as a separate entity from the Father’s throne. Conditions of this nature are millennial only ([Hebrew 1:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrew+1.8&t=NKJV); [Revelation 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV); [22:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.3&t=NKJV)). Christ, with His co-heirs, will reign from His own throne until He has “*put down all rule and all authority and power*.” Then, when “all things” have been made subject to Christ, the kingdom will be delivered up “*to God, even the Father*,” with all things made subject to Christ, in order that “*God may be all in all* [*lit*., ‘all things in all of these things’]” ([1 Corinthians 15:24-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.24-28&t=NKJV)). This will occur at the end of the Millennium, and Christ will then assume a position on a central throne with His Father called, “*the throne of God and of the Lamb*” ([Revelation 22:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.1&t=NKJV), [3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.3&t=NKJV)).

*Second*, there is the matter of the location of Christ’s throne. During the Millennium, Christ’s throne will be in the New Jerusalem positioned in the heavens above the present earth. During the eternal ages, “*the throne of God and of the Lamb*” will, likewise, be in the New Jerusalem; but the location of the New Jerusalem will be quite different. The present heavens and earth will be destroyed at the end of the Millennium, and a new heavens and a new earth will be brought into existence.

The New Jerusalem will rest upon the new earth, and God Himself will reside therein, sitting on a throne, with His Son alongside. A rule from the heavens over the earth (millennial) will be a thing of the past, and “*the throne of God and of the Lamb*” will become the central point in the heavens of an eternal rule extending throughout the universe (*cf*. [2 Peter 3:10-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.10-13&t=NKJV); [Revelation 21:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.1ff&t=NKJV)).

*Third*, there is the matter of the manner in which Christ will rule. During the Millennium, Christ and His co-heirs will rule the nations with “*a rod of iron*”; but a rule after this fashion would be out of place during the eternal ages. During the Millennium, absolute force will be used to bring and keep the nations under subjection; but such will be unnecessary during the eternal ages. Conditions on the new earth will be quite different than millennial conditions on the present earth. There will be no more sin, death, etc. ([Revelation 21:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.3-4&t=NKJV)); and this will allow for numerous changes in the manner of the administration of governmental affairs.

Satan will be bound in the abyss during the Millennium, but at the conclusion of the Millennium he will be loosed for “*a little season* [short time].” The rebellion evident among nations during the Millennium, necessitating the rule with “*a rod of iron*,” will then be brought to a head. The rebel nations will ally with Satan and under his banner march against Christ and His co-heirs in one final, vain, climactic thrust. The entire matter though will be speedily brought to an end by and through *fire “from God out of heaven”* (*cf*. [Ezekiel 28:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.18-19&t=NKJV) [18b]).

Satan will then be cast into the lake of fire, the judgment of the unsaved dead from throughout Man’s Day will occur, and the time for major changes will be at hand. At this time the kingdom will be delivered up to the Father, the present heavens and earth will pass out of existence, the new heavens and new earth will come into existence, the new Jerusalem will descend from heaven to rest upon the new earth, and the throne of God and the throne of Christ will become *one* throne. The nations will then dwell upon the new earth, with God Himself dwelling in their midst.

(God rules from a place in the heavens over the entire universe. Then, provinces throughout His universe are governed by appointed rulers who apparently exercise their delegated power and authority from places in the heavens in relation to the province being ruled [*e.g*., Satan and his angels presently rule from a place in the heavens in relation to the earth (*cf*. [Daniel 10:13-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+10.13-20&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.2&t=NKJV); [6:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.11&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.20&t=NKJV)], and this structured rule would apparently be the same relative to provinces ruled by angels elsewhere in the universe [*i.e*., ruled from places in the heavens in relation to the different provinces]. It is in this manner that “*the heavens do rule*” [beginning with God, the supreme Ruler over all].

During the Messianic Era, Christ and His bride will exercise delegated power and authority over the earth from the same sphere in which Satan and His angels presently rule [*cf*. [Job 16:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Job+16.15&t=NKJV); [Revelation 12:7-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+12.7-12&t=NKJV)]. Then, during the eternal ages, the new earth will be the place in the heavens from where universal rule will emanate [in the heavens in relation to the entire universe, as God’s present dwelling place is in the heavens in relation to the entire universe].)

1) Crowns, Rewards — Millennial or Eternal

Promises to Christians concerning crowns, rewards, etc. are to be realized during the millennial age rather than during the eternal ages. Many conditions surrounding proffered positions with Christ will not exist during the eternal ages, as noted in previous comments concerning differences in Christ’s reign during the Millennium and during the ages beyond.

(Note, for example, the overcomer’s promises in Revelation chapters two and three. That these promises are *millennial only* in nature is made plain by several of the promises.

In the overcomer’s promise to the church in Smyrna, it is evident that death will exist during the Millennium [[Revelation 2:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.11&t=NKJV); *cf.* [Romans 8:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.13&t=NKJV)]; but this will not be the case beyond the Millennium, during the eternal ages [[Revelation 21:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.4&t=NKJV)]. In the overcomer’s promise to the church in Thyatira, ruling with “*a rod of iron*” is in view [[Revelation 2:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+2.26-28&t=NKJV)]. And no such scene as this exists during the present dispensation; nor will such a scene exist during the eternal ages. Then, in the overcomer’s promise to the church in Laodicea, Christ’s throne is in view. Christ is not seated on His own throne today; nor will this throne exist separate from the Father’s throne beyond the Millennium [*cf*. [Hebrew 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrew+1.13&t=NKJV); [Revelation 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV); [22:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.3&t=NKJV)].

Thus, it is plain that the things seen in the overcomer’s promises in these two chapters can be realized during the Millennial Era alone. They can have nothing to do with the eternal ages beyond the Millennium.)

This, however, does not at all teach that the reign of Christ and Christians will end at the conclusion of the Millennium. This only shows that their reign during the eternal ages will be *outside* the scope of the overcomer’s promises and *quite different* than their reign during the preceding Millennium.

God’s revelation to man concerns itself with “time” — *seven thousand years of time* — from the creation of Adam to the end of the Messianic Kingdom. Very little is revealed about that which occurred before the creation of Adam, and very little is revealed about that which will occur beyond the Millennium. Scripture does reveal though that the reign of Christ and Christians will continue, and the length of this continuing reign is specifically stated to be “*forever and ever* [Greek: *eis tous aionas ton aionon*, ‘with respect to the ages of the ages,’ *i.e*., ‘throughout the endless ages’]” ([Revelation 11:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.15&t=NKJV); [22:3-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.3-5&t=NKJV)).

The activity of Christ and Christians in this continuing reign is not revealed in so many words, but Scripture does present enough information that several observations can be made:

A) Extent of Christ’s Rule

The rule of Christ itself during the eternal ages will no longer be limited to the earth. Rather, it will extend beyond the earth (the new earth), out into the universe.

Christ will be seated upon a throne from which there will be an administration of power and authority throughout the universe (“*the throne of God and of the Lamb*” [[Revelation 22:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.3&t=NKJV)]); and the Christians’ continuing rule “*with Christ*” ([Revelation 22:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+22.5&t=NKJV)) would have to be of a like nature, for the power will no longer emanate from *Christ’s throne*, but from *the throne of God and of the Lamb*.

In this respect, the rule by Christ and His co-heirs *over the earth* during the Millennium can only be extended to a rule *over worlds throughout the universe* following the Millennium.

B) Millennial and Eternal Blessings

To what extent though, if any, will rewards that are realized by overcoming Christians during the Millennium carry over into the eternal ages beyond? The question is really unanswerable.

The wiping away of all tears at the conclusion of the Millennium and the fact that the overcomer’s promises are millennial only in nature would clearly indicate that distinctions that existed during the millennial age between overcoming and non-overcoming Christians will not exist during the eternal ages beyond the Millennium.

But, to take matters beyond this point and say that *no rewards* exercised by overcoming Christians during the millennial age will extend over into the eternal ages beyond the Millennium (or have any bearing on the place that they will occupy beyond the Millennium) would be carrying matters *beyond* Scriptural grounds. Scripture simply does not deal with the matter.

2) All Things New

The Millennium will not, as many envision, be a time of perfection. Such a state awaits the first of many ages beyond the Millennium. *The restoration of all things* will occur before the Millennium, at the end of six thousand years of time; but *the making of all things new* awaits the completion of the Millennium, at the end of seven thousand years of time (*cf*. [Acts 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+3.21&t=NKJV); [Revelation 21:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.5&t=NKJV)). Only then will *a perfect order* in all of God’s creation exist.

As the present age (Man’s Day) has a purpose, so will the millennial age (the Lord’s Day); and the ultimate goal of all will be realized in the ages beyond. The rulers for the millennial age are being acquired during the present age; and during the millennial age these rulers will, as co-heirs with Christ, participate in the age-long work of bringing all things under subjection to Christ. Such a work, brought to pass by and through a rule with “*a rod of iron*,” anticipates the ages beyond the Millennium, in which a rule with “*a rod of iron*” will no longer be necessary; and the reason for man’s creation will then be realized in its fullest sense.

Man will not only realize the reason for his creation during the Millennium but also during the eternal ages beyond the Millennium. Dominion will be restricted to this earth during the Millennium, but not so during the eternal ages after the new heavens and new earth have been brought into existence. Man’s rule in that day can only extend into places throughout the universe itself, and man will evidently have access to the universe (something that will not be the case at all during the Millennium). This appears to be the clear teaching derived from Scriptures touching upon the subject.

Concluding Thoughts:

The emphasis in that which is taught within Christian circles today should revolve primarily around *millennial* verities rather than *eternal*. This is where Scripture places the emphasis; and this is where man should likewise place the emphasis. A pastoral ministry, to be completely in phase with Scripture, *must*, during the present time, center around *millennial* verities, though not to the exclusion of the eternal.

The entire program of God has, from the beginning, been moving toward the coming *Sabbath of rest*, paralleling *the seventh day* in [Genesis 2:2-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.2-3&t=NKJV). The great prophecies of Scripture speak of this day, Christians are exhorted to fix their attention upon this day, and the judgment seat of Christ precedes and has to do with this day. To ignore the Millennium, one must ignore the central teaching of Scripture, beginning with the book of Genesis and ending with the book of Revelation. And such can ultimately lead to only one thing: *disaster in the Christian life.*

*A trained runner fixes his attention upon the goal; and a trained Christian, in the present race of the faith, will likewise fix his attention upon the goal*:

*Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.*

*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified* [disapproved (which will occur at the judgment seat, with the Messianic Era in view)].” ([1 Corinthians 9:26-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.26-27&t=NKJV))

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Chapter 15

**You Can Rule and Reign**

*Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”* ([Numbers 13:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13.30&t=NKJV))

The Israelites under Moses, preceding their departure from Egypt, slew the paschal lambs and appropriated the blood of these lambs in Egypt, for a purpose; and this purpose was to be realized beyond Egypt, in the land of Canaan.

The nation of Israel constituted a redeemed, adopted people who had been called from one land to go into another and there realize the rights of primogeniture. This nation had been removed from Egypt and was ultimately placed in a position where the people could enter the land of Canaan, conquer the inhabitants of the land, and rule over “*all the nations of the earth*” as “*a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation*.”

This is the manner in which the outworking of the promised blessings destined to flow through Abraham and his seed to the Gentile nations would be brought to pass. Israel was to be placed at the head of the nations, as *God’s firstborn son*, the nation in possession of the rights of primogeniture. Israel was to rule as “*a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation*”; and the Gentile nations of the earth were to be ruled by and blessed through Israel (*cf*. [Genesis 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.3&t=NKJV); [22:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.17-18&t=NKJV); [Exodus 4:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+4.22-23&t=NKJV); [19:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.5-6&t=NKJV)).

At Kadesh-Barnea, when the Israelites were ready to enter the land of Canaan, Moses first sent spies into the land to obtain information concerning both the land and the inhabitants. Twelve spies, one from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, traversed the land, “*from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob*,” for forty days and nights. They then returned to the camp of Israel with their report, along with samples of the fruits of the land (grapes, figs, and pomegranates [[Numbers 13:21-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13.21-25&t=NKJV)]).

All twelve spies together gave a report before Moses, Aaron, and the people, which simply had to do with facts concerning the land and its inhabitants — *a land flowing with milk and honey, inhabited by a strong people dwelling in walled cities* ([Numbers 13:26-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13.26-29&t=NKJV)).

Then, two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua — on the basis of that which they had seen, in conjunction with Israel’s calling and God’s power — presented *a positive report* concerning the ability of the Israelites to enter in and conquer the inhabitants. They stated that the Israelites *would be “well able to overcome it* [the people in the land, with their strength, walled cities, etc.].” ([Numbers 13:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13.30&t=NKJV))

However, the remaining ten spies presented a negative report concerning the matter. They stated — on the basis of that which they had seen, ignoring Israel’s calling and God’s power — that the Israelites would *not be “able to go up against the people”* (among whom were “*the giants* [Hebrew: *Nephilim*, fallen ones], *the sons of Anak*” [[Numbers 13:31-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13.31-33&t=NKJV)]).

And it was at this point that the Israelites made *a decision with far-reaching ramifications*. It was at this point that the Israelites made their crucial decision relative to whether they would enter the land and allow God to fulfill His purpose for calling the nation into existence or whether they would refuse to enter the land, turning their backs upon the entire matter.

The Israelites, to their own detriment and to the detriment of the surrounding Gentile nations that were to be blessed through Israel, chose to believe the “*bad report*” proclaimed by the ten spies. They turned away from God’s promises, they turned their backs upon the land, and they turned against Moses and Aaron. Then, they sought to appoint a new leader, with a view to returning to Egypt ([Numbers 14:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14.1-4&t=NKJV)).

As a consequence, God pronounced judgment upon the entire unbelieving, rebellious generation, twenty years old and above. This generation was destined *to be overthrown in the wilderness, short of the goal of their calling*. Then, the ten spies who had brought a “*bad report*” before the people of Israel “*died by the plague before the Lord*”; and during the next thirty-eight and one-half years the “carcasses” of the remainder of the unbelieving, rebellious Israelites fell in the wilderness ([Numbers 14:5ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14.5ff&t=NKJV); cf. [Hebrews 3:8-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.8-19&t=NKJV)).

Caleb and Joshua though, because they believed that God would bring to completion His plans and purposes that He had for Israel at the time He led the nation out of Egypt, doing exactly what He had promised, were *not* numbered among those overthrown in the wilderness. They, rather, were numbered among those of the succeeding generation that would be allowed to enter the land.

In fact, the Lord appointed Joshua to lead the people into the land following the death of Moses. Then, once the nation had become securely established in the land, Caleb and Joshua *both* realized their inheritance ([Numbers 14:24-38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14.24-38&t=NKJV); [Joshua 14:7-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joshua+14.7-15&t=NKJV); [19:49-50](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joshua+19.49-50&t=NKJV)).

Type — Antitype

The experiences of the Israelites under Moses establishes the basic, fundamental type that God uses concerning the experiences of Christians under Christ ([1 Corinthians 9:24-10:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-10.11&t=NKJV)). The One who is greater than Moses is today leading another group out of this world to a calling removed from the world (as in the type, out of Egypt [a type of the world] to a place removed from Egypt).

In the antitype though, the calling is *heavenly* rather than *earthly*. Christians under Christ have a calling associated with *the heavens*, as Israel under Moses had a calling associated with *the earth*.

Christians have appropriated the blood of the Passover Lamb (as the Israelites appropriated the blood of the paschal lambs in Egypt) and presently constitute a redeemed people called into existence for definite and specific purposes. Christians are being called from one land to go into another and there realize the rights of primogeniture. And they, as the Israelites under Moses, are to engage the present occupants of the land in battle, with a view to both a conquest of the land and the realization of an ultimate inheritance in the land.

Scripture specifically states that our warfare is “*not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places* [against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenlies]” ([Ephesians 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.12&t=NKJV)). Satan and his angels occupy this heavenly realm, as the corrupted nations of Canaan occupied the earthly realm to which Israel had been called; and Christians — within the scope of their calling, drawn from the type — are to enter in, engage, and overcome “the spirit forces of wickedness.” And this is all with a view to Christians one day realizing an inheritance as co-heirs with Christ in this heavenly land.

The report and fruit brought back to the camp of Israel by the twelve spies during Moses’ day has its counterpart in the report and fruit that Christians presently have available in the revealed Word of God. Christians are told about the inhabitants of the land ([Ephesians 6:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.11ff&t=NKJV)); and, as in [Hebrews 6:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.5&t=NKJV), Christians can taste “*the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come*.”

Christians who have progressed into a mature understanding of the things concerning the land and its inhabitants then find themselves in exactly the same position as the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea under Moses. Such Christians can, under God, enter the land, engage the enemy, and be victorious over the enemy; or they can refuse to enter the land, resulting in their being overcome by the enemy apart from ever engaging the enemy in combat.

They can follow in the steps of Caleb and Joshua, or they can follow in the steps of the remainder of the nation. The decision is left entirely up to those Christians who have been brought to the antitype of Israel’s Kadesh-Barnea experience following the report of the twelve spies.

Ruin Produced by Unbelief

*Unbelief* manifested by Israel at Kadesh-Barnea was not something that occurred overnight. Such unbelief had been building from the very time God began to manifest His “wonders in Egypt” through Moses. The people did not understand His mighty works then, and they were quick to forget His mighty works following the Red Sea passage. They “*lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert . . . They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molded image . . . They forgot God their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt*” ([Psalm 106:7ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+106.7ff&t=NKJV)). The climax of the entire matter though was the fact that “*they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His Word*” ([Psalm 106:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+106.24&t=NKJV)).

At this time, at Kadesh-Barnea, God had allowed them to come up to the very goal of their calling. But once they had “*despised the pleasant land*” and “*did not believe His Word*” — refusing to enter the land and realize the goal of their calling — *that was the end of the matter*.

God will not countenance sin of any type. But *the nature, time, and place of this sin* necessitated God’s immediate intervention into the affairs of His people, resulting in His actions. And the Israelites, because of *the nature of their unbelief at this particular time and place*, were left without recourse. They could now do only *one thing*. They could now only turn back into the wilderness, where the entire accountable generation would die, short of the goal of their calling.

At Mount Sinai, following the forming and the worship of the molded (KJV: molten) calf, God set about to do away with the present nation and begin anew through Moses, making of him “*a great nation*”; and this same thing also occurred following the manifested unbelief of the people at Kadesh-Barnea ([Exodus 32:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+32.9-10&t=NKJV); [Numbers 14:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14.11-12&t=NKJV)). But Moses’ intercession on behalf of Israel, on both occasions, stayed God’s hand of judgment after this fashion ([Exodus 32:11-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+32.11-14&t=NKJV); [Numbers 14:13-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14.13-20&t=NKJV)).

Events at Kadesh-Barnea though occurred at *a terminal point* in God’s plans and purposes rather than at *a preparatory point*, as those at Mount Sinai; and, consequently, following God’s pronouncement at Kadesh-Barnea that the nation itself would be spared, circumstances were *quite different* than those existing at the time that this same announcement was heard at Mount Sinai.

Following the events at Mount Sinai, Moses was instructed to “*lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you . . . the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob*” ([Exodus 32:34-33:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+32.34-33.1&t=NKJV)). But following similar events at Kadesh-Barnea, ending the same way as at Mount Sinai — which followed the people’s refusal to enter the land — there was then *no place* for Moses to lead them. They were *at the end of the line*; and, although the nation itself would be spared, there was nothing left for God to do but set the entire accountable generation aside.

Immediately after God announced at Kadesh-Barnea that the nation would be spared, He then turned and pronounced judgment upon those who had seen His glory and miracles but had now tempted Him “*these ten times*” ([Numbers 14:22ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14.22ff&t=NKJV)). The number “ten” is an apparent allusion to both *the ten faithless spies* and *the fullness in God’s sight of Israel’s unfaithfulness*, dating all the way back to the time when He had first begun to deal with the nation in Egypt.

“Ten” is the number of *ordinal completion*, pointing in [Numbers 14:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14.22&t=NKJV) to the full extent that the nation would be allowed to go in their unfaithfulness before judgment fell. As God had dealt with the Amorites in [Genesis 15:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+15.16&t=NKJV), so He would deal with the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea. Judgment was withheld upon the Amorites until their iniquity had become *full*, and judgment was withheld upon the Israelites until they had reached this same point at Kadesh-Barnea.

After Israel’s unfaithfulness had been manifested in all its fullness, judgment fell. And God, during the next thirty-eight and one-half years, overthrew the entire accountable generation in the wilderness. Not a single Israelite numbered among this unfaithful generation was spared to subsequently enter the land under Joshua.

Reward Awaiting Belief

*Obedience to that which God has said is the crucial matter*. A seeming impossibility surrounding the issue at hand, as with the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea, is of no moment. God has spoken, the matter is in His hands, and His people are to exhibit *faithfulness* therein.

1) Natural or Supernatural Means

The Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea viewed entrance into the land from two perspectives — *naturalistic*, and *supernaturalistic*.

From a *naturalistic* perspective, there was no question concerning the inability of the Israelites to go in and take the land. The inhabitants of the land were stronger, and the Israelites were no match for them. This was plainly exhibited when the Israelites subsequently sought to enter the land apart from the presence, power, and leadership of the Lord ([Numbers 13:28-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13.28-29&t=NKJV); [14:40-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14.40-45&t=NKJV)).

However, viewing entrance into the land from *a supernaturalistic* perspective, the strength possessed by the inhabitants of the land was of no moment. Strength to defeat the enemy did not lie within the ability of the Israelites themselves (that would have been *naturalistic*), but outside their ability (*supernaturalistic*).

*The battle belonged to the Lord* ([2 Chronicles 20:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Chronicles+20.15&t=NKJV)); and no obedient Israelite, exercising faithfulness after the order of Caleb and Joshua, could fail in battle. Failure within the realm of faithfulness *was not possible*, for such would reflect upon the very faithfulness of God itself. *Failure could come only through “unfaithfulness.”*

2) Possessing the Land

The earthly land inhabited by the nations of Canaan has its counterpart in that heavenly land inhabited by Satan and his angels. There were supernatural beings (the “*giants* [Hebrews: *Nephilim*, fallen ones]”) contesting the right of the Israelites to enter into and take possession of the earthly land, and there are supernatural beings (Satan and his angels) contesting the right of Christians to enter into and take possession of the heavenly land.

The *Nephilim* (the offspring resulting from the co-habitation of the “*sons of God* [angels within Satan’s kingdom]” with the “*daughters of men* [female offspring from the lineage of Adam; *cf*. [Genesis 6:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+6.2-4&t=NKJV); [Numbers 13:32-33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+13.32-33&t=NKJV)]”) had infiltrated the nations of Canaan, opposing the Israelites’ entrance into and conquest of the land; and many of the very ones responsible for this past condition of the land of Canaan presently inhabit the heavenly land, opposing the Christians’ entrance into and conquest of that land.

The Israelites had been redeemed in Egypt and prepared in the wilderness for that time when God would open the way for them to go in and take the land. The law had been given to Israel at Mount Sinai, along with instructions for the tabernacle and its associated priestly ministry and worship. The law with its rules and regulations was to be Israel’s constitution — the Magna Charta for the kingdom — given to govern the nation’s affairs in the kingdom; and the tabernacle with God dwelling in the Holy of Holies in the midst of His people was to be the central place of worship for the “*kingdom of priests*,” through whom God would bless all the nations. Israel, God’s firstborn son, was to enter the land, conquer the inhabitants, and bear rule in a worldwide theocracy after this fashion.

Not only were the Israelites prepared in the wilderness for the task ahead, but at Kadesh-Barnea they had been brought into an intimate knowledge of things concerning the land itself. They heard the report of the spies who had traversed the land; along with seeing and tasting the actual fruits of the land. In essence, they had moved in one and one-half years from a simple knowledge concerning things relative to the death of the paschal lambs in Egypt to a mature knowledge concerning the land and entrance therein. They had moved from what is called in the Greek text *gnosis* (knowledge) to *epignosis* (mature knowledge). God had brought them into such *mature knowledge* for one central purpose:

*Entrance into and conquest of the land, along with all that would be involved in the theocracy once they were in the land.*

The entire matter is the same in Christendom today. God does not immediately move newborn Christians onto the front lines against the enemy in the land. Rather, He first trains and prepares them. Within this preparation, there is a progression in teaching that leads Christians from a *rudimentary knowledge* concerning *the death of the Passover* *Lamb to a mature knowledge* concerning *the land and entrance therein.*

In other words, the preparation of Christians involves leading them from *gnosis* (knowledge) to *epignosis* (mature knowledge); and God brings Christians into such mature knowledge for one central purpose:

*Entrance into and conquest of the land, along with all that will be involved in the theocracy once they are in the land*.

There is a land to be possessed; but as in the earthly, so in the heavenly — Christians must enter in and engage the enemy. There can be no such thing as a Christian being victorious in this realm who has never gone forth to battle. *The victors alone* (overcomers during the present dispensation) will ultimately *possess the land and rule within the theocracy*.

Ability

There was no question in the minds of Caleb and Joshua concerning the ability of the Israelites, under God, to enter in and possess the land. Their attitude, voiced in Caleb’s words, was, “*Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it*.” And this *must* be the attitude expressed by Christians today, for *therein alone can victory be achieved*.

The Israelites would have been *well able* to take the land. Their ability lay completely within God’s power and provision. That which God *had begun* in Egypt and *continued* in the wilderness was to be *carried through to completion* in the land of Canaan. God, by and through His power, *had removed* them from Egypt and *sustained* them during their wilderness journey; and, beyond Kadesh-Barnea, He *would have provided victory over the enemy* and *would have subsequently established them in the land*.

But the Israelites refused to enter the land. Their *unbelief*, which had been building from the time God began to perform His mighty works in Egypt, caused them to look to their own inadequate ability. This then led them *to turn from* the land of Canaan and *longingly look back* to the land that they had left, the land of Egypt ([Numbers 14:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14.2-4&t=NKJV); cf. [Luke 9:62](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+9.62&t=NKJV)). *They suffered defeat before ever engaging the enemy in combat*.

And things are no different in Christendom today. Christians are *well able* to take the land set before them. Their provision *lies completely within God’s power and control of the matter*. That which God *began* in the life of a Christian at the point of his salvation is to be carried through *to completion* in the land set before him. God, by and through His power, has *redeemed* the individual, is presently *sustaining* him during his pilgrim journey, and desires to *establish* him in the land to which he has been called.

Should the Christian fail in his calling relative to the land (in the antitype of Israel’s failure at Kadesh-Barnea), he, as the faithless Israelites, places himself in a position of unbelief concerning entrance into the land. The goal of his calling involves entrance into and conquest of the land; and once this goal has been set aside, there is nothing left. Such a Christian has rejected his calling; the purpose for his very existence has been discarded. And this is the point in the antitype where unfaithfulness reaches the full extent that God will allow.

This is the point where the number “ten” from [Numbers 14:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14.22&t=NKJV) comes into view. And, as with the Israelites, so with Christians: God withholds *terminal* judgment in one’s life relative to the land and the things of the land up to this point, *but not beyond*.

(In order to understand why judgment must fall at this point in God’s dealings with His people — whether in His dealings with Israel [the type] or in His dealings with Christians [the antitype] — study [Hebrews 6:4-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.4-6&t=NKJV) in the light of its context [[Hebrews 3-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3-5&t=NKJV)]. Understanding this type-antitype structure will reveal *the why* of the word “impossible” in [Hebrews 6:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.4&t=NKJV).)

Just as there was no reason for the Israelites under Moses to have failed to realize the goal of their calling in the type, there is no reason for Christians under Christ to fail to realize the goal of their calling in the antitype. The One who has “*begun a good work in you* [at the point of one’s eternal salvation] *will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ* [that time beyond the present dispensation when all Christians appear before the judgment seat of Christ]” ([Philippians 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.6&t=NKJV)). God will continue His work in the lives of Christians in order to bring them victoriously into the land.

*This is the goal!*  But Christians *must* patiently endure in the present race of the faith. They *must* keep their eyes fixed upon Jesus, “*the Author* [Originator] *and Finisher* [Perfecter] *of our faith*” ([Hebrews 12:1-2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.1-2&t=NKJV); *cf*. [James 1:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.2-4&t=NKJV), [12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.7&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 1:5-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.5-11&t=NKJV)). It is through the supernatural power of God *alone* — the power presently performing a work in the lives of Christians, with one main goal in view — that Christians can overcome the supernatural power of the enemy.

The Battle for the Land

From the point of the Israelites’ appropriation of the blood of the paschal lambs in Egypt, everything was directed toward one goal — *entrance into and occupation of an earthly land, with the theocracy in view*.

And it is the same in the lives of Christians today. From the point of their appropriation of the blood of the Passover Lamb, everything is likewise directed toward one goal — *entrance into and occupation of a heavenly land, with a theocracy in view.*

Christians have *a heavenly calling, a heavenly hope, a heavenly inheritance, a heavenly citizenship, heavenly blessings, and they are confronted with an ever-present heavenly battle* against the present rulers who occupy the heavenly land to which they have been called ([Ephesians 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.3&t=NKJV); [6:11-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.11-18&t=NKJV); [Philippians 3:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+3.20&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.5&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 3:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+3.1&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.4&t=NKJV)).

The one book in the New Testament that, in its overall structure, possibly sets forth that facet of truth dealing with the Christians’ relationship to *the heavenly* land better than any other is Paul’s epistle, Ephesians. Paul used the expression “*in heavenly places* [*lit*. in the heavenlies]” five different times in the six chapters of this epistle.

Two of these times, *the Christians’ position in the heavenlies* is in view ([Ephesians 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.3&t=NKJV); [2:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.6&t=NKJV)); two other times, *the position of Satan and his angels in the heavenlies* comes into view ([Ephesians 3:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.10&t=NKJV); [6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.12&t=NKJV)); and the other time, *the position of Christ at the right hand of God, also in a heavenly place*, is in view ([Ephesians 1:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.20&t=NKJV)).

1) In the Heavenlies

Revelation in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians begins by revealing *blessings* awaiting Christians “*in heavenly places* [‘in the heavenlies’] *in Christ*,” and terminates by revealing *a warfare* confronting Christians against “*spiritual wickedness in high places* [‘the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenlies’]” ([Ephesians 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.3&t=NKJV); [6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.12&t=NKJV)). *The heavenlies*, wherein blessings are to be realized in chapter one, and *the heavenlies* in which the enemy presently resides in chapters three and six, must be looked upon as one and the same.

A Christians positional standing is “*in Christ*” in the heavenlies where God Himself dwells; but, contextually, the spiritual blessings in view are to be realized by Christians as they move in, conquer, and dwell in the heavenly land held by the enemy in chapter six. In this respect, there are heavenly blessings for present victorious engagements of the enemy, and there are heavenly blessings awaiting victorious Christians in that coming day when the enemy will finally be dislodged from the land.

Contextually, *the blessings* in chapter one are associated with the “*adoption*” ([Ephesians 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.5&t=NKJV)), the “*dispensation of the fullness of the times*” ([Ephesians 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.10&t=NKJV)), the “*inheritance*” ([Ephesians 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.11&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.14&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.18&t=NKJV)), and the “*wisdom and revelation in the knowledge* [Greek: *epignosis*, mature knowledge] *of Him*” ([Ephesians 1:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.17&t=NKJV)). Such blessings to be realized by Christians are, thus, intimately associated with *the heavenly land* to which they have been called; and the entire matter is projected out into the coming age, but not to the exclusion of the present dispensation.

The present spiritual warfare in the heavenlies is with a view to *the coming age*, but spiritual blessings await the victors during both *present* and *future* time. There can be no future occupation of the land apart from a present warfare against the enemy; and the blessings extend throughout both eras.

Ephesians moves progressively from chapter one into things relative to eternal salvation and the revelation of the mystery in chapters two and three. Believing Gentiles have been placed together in the same body with believing Jews. God has broken down the “*middle wall of partition*” by creating *one new man*, where there is neither “*Jew nor Greek*” ([Ephesians 2:8-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8-16&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Galatians 3:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.28&t=NKJV)).

Believing Jews and believing Gentiles, together in one body, forming *the one new man*, then become “*fellowheirs*” of *the heavenly* promises and blessings in view ([Ephesians 3:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.6&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Galatians 3:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.29&t=NKJV)). The very purpose for an individual’s salvation is to be realized through the reception of the inheritance introduced in chapter one and continued in chapters two and three.

The Christians’ association with the heavenlies is presently being made known to the “*principalities and powers in heavenly places* [in the heavenlies]” “*by* [through] *the Church*” ([Ephesians 3:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.9-10&t=NKJV)). God is making known to the incumbent rulers in the heavenlies that *they are about to be replaced*; and He is making this known through the ones who are destined to occupy these positions, *the ones presently engaging the enemy in the heavenlies*.

Ephesians then continues by exhorting Christians to walk worthy of their high calling ([Ephesians 4:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+4.1ff&t=NKJV)) and revealing the need for pastor-teachers in the Church ([Ephesians 4:11-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+4.11-16&t=NKJV)). Pastor-teachers have been placed in the Church to lead Christians into a mature knowledge of, contextually, *their calling in relation to the heavenlies*.

Christians are to know about the blessings awaiting them in the heavenlies, the coming dispensation, the inheritance, the mystery, etc. And to make this known, in the strict biblical sense, is the primary task of pastor-teachers.

The latter part of chapter four and the first part of chapter five continues with thoughts and exhortations concerning walking worthy of one’s high calling; and this is followed by related material in the latter part of chapter five and the first part of chapter six concerning the relationship of husbands and wives, children and parents, and servants and masters.

Then, at the conclusion of the epistle, in the latter part of chapter six, *the crux* of the entire matter comes into view. Beginning in [Ephesians 6:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.10&t=NKJV), the apostle Paul says, “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*.” The engagement with the enemy now comes to *the forefront* in the epistle. *The enemy is revealed, and the proper armor with which the Christian is to clothe himself is given* ([Ephesians 6:12-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.12-17&t=NKJV)).

2) The Spiritual Warfare

There is *a battle* to be fought, and there is *a victory* to be won. This battle not only requires *extensive preparation* but also *the correct armor*; and pastor-teachers in the Church are to see that Christians placed under their care become properly equipped to engage the enemy in the battle at hand (*cf*. [Ephesians 3:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.10-11&t=NKJV); [4:11-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+4.11-16&t=NKJV); [6:11-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.11-18&t=NKJV)).

Going forth to battle, one’s loins are to be *girded with truth* (showing truthfulness, earnestness, and sincerity in the conflict), a person is to have on *the breastplate of righteousness* (showing a righteous manner of living), his feet are to be shod with *the preparation of the gospel of peace* (showing that the messenger properly understands and is able to proclaim both present and future aspects of salvation), he is to take *the shield of faith* (showing faithfulness to act in the realm God has commanded), he is to put on *the helmet of salvation* (showing a hope relative to a future salvation [the salvation of the soul]), and he is to take *the sword of the Spirit* (showing an acquisition of the Word of God). Only in this fashion can a Christian stand in a victorious manner against “*the wiles of the devil*.”

(Refer to chapter 4 in this book for a more complete discussion of [Ephesians 6:14-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+6.14-17&t=NKJV).)

One’s *faithfulness* in the entire realm of proper preparation is the primary prerequisite. As in [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV), one is to “*contend earnestly for the faith* [*i.e*., ‘earnestly strive for (with reference to, in the good contest of) the faith’].” He, according to the parallel passage in [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV), is to “*Fight the good fight of faith* [*lit*. Strive in the good contest of the faith]”; and, in this manner he is to “*lay hold on eternal life* [*lit*., lay hold on life for the age (a future salvation, to be realized during the Messianic Era, associated in the text with *his calling*)].”

The words translated “*contend*” in [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV) and “*fight*” in [1 Timothy 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+6.12&t=NKJV) are from *epagonizomai* and *agonizomai* respectively in the Greek text. Note that the only difference in these two words is the prefix “*ep*” in Jude (this is the preposition *epi* [upon] prefixed to the word [the “*i*” is dropped when *epi* is prefixed to a word beginning with a vowel]). *Epi*, used in this manner, intensifies the meaning of the word, providing the translation, “*contend earnestly* [earnestly strive].”

*Agonizomai* is the Greek word from which our English word “agonize” is derived. The word could more properly be translated “strive,” as in [Luke 13:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+13.24&t=NKJV) and [1 Corinthians 9:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.25&t=NKJV). Every muscle is to be strained; every effort is to be expended, in the “good contest of the faith.”

In [Jude 1:3-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3-5&t=NKJV) this contest is associated with entrance into the land to which Christians have been called; and the false teachers in these verses are seeking, by and through that which they are teaching, to mislead and thus prevent Christians from entering this land (*ref*. the ten unfaithful spies and the results of their message). However, Christians following the admonition in [Jude 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.3&t=NKJV) need not fear the false teachers in [Jude 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.4&t=NKJV), nor fear being numbered among the unfaithful in [Jude 1:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jude+1.5&t=NKJV). Such Christians will experience victory after victory in the battle and partake of rich spiritual blessings that the Lord has reserved for His conquerors, both now and in the coming age.

Concluding Thoughts:

*Dare to be a Caleb! Dare to be a Joshua!*

Rewards for those who so govern their lives will be the same as Caleb and Joshua’s — *present victory, and the ultimate possession of one’s inheritance* ([Joshua 13:7-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joshua+13.7-14&t=NKJV); [19:48-50](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Joshua+19.48-50&t=NKJV)).

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Chapter 16

**When He Is Approved**

*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.* ([James 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV))

The epistle of James — as all epistles in the New Testament — centers its teaching on different facets of *the salvation of the soul* ([James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV); [5:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+5.19-20&t=NKJV)), which is with a view to *an inheritance in Christ’s coming kingdom* ([James 2:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.5&t=NKJV)). This epistle opens by pointing to the fact that the various trials, testing in one’s life (the trying of one’s faith), result in “*patience* [patient endurance]”; and a Christian is to patiently endure under these trials and testing, allowing the Lord to progressively lead him from immaturity to maturity in the faith.

He is to let “*patience have its perfect work* [patient endurance have its end-time work]” in order that he might be “*perfect and complete, lacking nothing* [mature and complete, lacking nothing]” ([James 1:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.2-4&t=NKJV)).

Christians are not brought from immaturity to maturity in the faith overnight. Maturity in the faith is *a lifelong process*. When God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham had numerous things to learn about how the Lord works patient endurance and brings about maturity in one’s life.

Abraham failed many times (*e.g*., not leaving his kindred behind in Ur, going down to Egypt for help, seeking to help God fulfill His promise concerning a son, etc. [[Genesis 12:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.1&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.10&t=NKJV); [16:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+16.1ff&t=NKJV)]); but God continued to work in Abraham’s life until he had been brought to the place of unquestioned obedience, to the place where there was complete reliance upon the Lord.

It was not until some sixty years beyond the time Abraham had left Ur that he is seen being brought into a state where he was ready to undergo the supreme trial, the supreme test, in his life. God, at this time, instructed Abraham to offer His son “*for a burnt offering*,” at a particular place ([Genesis 22:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.1ff&t=NKJV)); and Abraham simply set about to do exactly what God had told him to do. There was no remonstrance, no delay, and no questions were asked; instead, *there was perfect obedience and complete reliance upon the Lord to bring matters to pass* (*cf*. [Psalm 37:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+37.5&t=NKJV)).

Abraham had been brought into this mature state in the true sense of [James 1:2-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.2-4&t=NKJV). He had learned *patient endurance* by and through his faith being tested. He had *patiently endured* under various trials and testing over a period of about six decades (though failure had occurred at times); and the Lord had, through this process, brought him into that mature state where he was “*complete, lacking nothing*.”

And Christians today are to be brought into a mature state through this same process (though failure, as it did with Abraham, may occur at times). Abraham’s faith (a belief in that which God had said) was tested, and a Christian’s faith (a belief in that which God has said) is to be tested.

(Note that there is an inseparable connection between a person being led from immaturity to maturity and that person receiving the Word of God into his saved human spirit. There can be no growth from immaturity to maturity apart from a reception of the Word, for *faith* — believing God, the one thing pervading the whole of the matter — “*comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*” [[Romans 10:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+10.17&t=NKJV)].

In James, Christians are to “*receive with meekness the implanted Word*” [[James 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.21&t=NKJV)]. *They are to study the Word, meditate upon the Word, allow the Word to flow into their saved human spirits*. The indwelling Holy Spirit then takes this Word and leads Christians “*into all truth*” [[John 16:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+16.13-15&t=NKJV)]. Thus, it is this “*implanted Word*” that lies at the heart of all activity surrounding *the testing of one’s faith, which brings about patient endurance*.

The continued reception of the Word can only be *that which is seen as central* in the entire process. There can be no *testing of one’s faith apart from “the implanted Word,”* and there can be no *patient endurance and progressive growth toward maturity in the faith* apart from such testing.)

Approval

In [James 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.3&t=NKJV), the trials and testing of one’s faith bring about patient endurance. Then, in [James 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.4&t=NKJV), as in [James 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV), the individual is to continue to patiently endure under continued trials and testing that the Lord brings to pass in his life. A continued refining process after this fashion, progressively working *maturity*, is for *a revealed purpose*.

According to verse twelve, the man who patiently endures temptation in the manner set forth in these verses will be “*blessed*” of the Lord, he will be “*approved* (KJV: ‘tried’)” by the Lord, and he will then “*receive the crown of life”* from the Lord.

Thus, the entire matter is with an ultimate view to issues of the judgment seat of Christ and the Messianic Era to follow. “Approval” or “disapproval” in connection with *blessings* and *crowns* will occur at the judgment seat; and the reason for approval, blessings, and crowns will be realized in the era beyond, during the Messianic Era.

In this respect, the revealed purpose for the present patient endurance of Christians, leading to maturity, is in order that *they might one day realize the purpose for their calling*. This maturing process, for those allowing it to occur in their lives, will result in their one day being *approved* for positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.

(The word translated “*tried*” in verse twelve of the KJV is from *dokimos* in the Greek text, meaning “approved [through testing].” This same word, with the prefix “*a*,” appears in [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.27&t=NKJV) [*adokimos*]. The letter “a” negates the word, making it mean exactly the opposite. The context of [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.27&t=NKJV) has to do with running the present race of the faith, with a crown in view [[1 Corinthians 9:24-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.24-26&t=NKJV)], which is the identical thought in [James 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV). Paul sought to always keep his body under subjection (in reality, a patient endurance under trials and testing), lest after instructing others concerning this very thing, he himself could be “*disqualified* [KJV: ‘*a castaway*’ (be disapproved or be rejected)].”

*Dokimos* in its verb form [*dokimazo*], with the preposition *apo* prefixed to the word [*apodokimazo*], appears in [Hebrews 12:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.17&t=NKJV), where Esau was *rejected* for inherited blessings associated with the birthright. The preposition *apo* means “from”; and, prefixed to *dokimazo*, the word, for all practical purposes, means the same as *dokimos* with an “a” prefixed, as in [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.27&t=NKJV).)

In relation to the preceding, an object is in view — *the birthright*. Esau, although he was the firstborn, had sold his birthright; and, relative to *the inheritance*, he was now “*rejected*” (*apodokimazo*).

Esau was rejected immediately after his younger brother, Jacob, had received the blessing belonging to the firstborn. Prior to this time, Esau had *made light of his birthright*, considering it to be of *little value* (“*Esau despised his birthright*” [[Genesis 25:34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+25.34&t=NKJV)]. The Hebrew word translated “*despised*” means *to hold in contempt, to make light of*. The Septuagint version of the Old Testament uses a word that means *to consider of little value*).

Esau did not come into a realization of the true value of the birthright until *after* Isaac had bestowed the blessing belonging to the firstborn upon Jacob. It was *only then* that Esau realized what he had forfeited and sought to retrieve the rights belonging to the firstborn.

Esau, at this time, “*cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me, even me also, O my father*.’” But it was *too late*. The birthright had been forfeited, the blessing belonging to the firstborn had been bestowed upon another, and no reversal of the forfeiture and blessing could occur. The birthright, with its attendant blessing, was now beyond Esau’s grasp forever.

Esau, after realizing that the birthright was no longer his and was beyond his grasp forever, referred to the forfeited rights of the firstborn after this manner:

“*Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me—me also, O my father!*” ([Genesis 27:38a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+27.38a&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Genesis 27:34-37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+27.34-37&t=NKJV))

And it is recorded that Esau then “*lifted up his voice, and wept*.” ([Genesis 27:38b](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+27.38b&t=NKJV))

This is seen within another frame of reference in Matthew’s gospel where individuals are seen *weeping and gnashing their teeth* ([Matthew 13:42](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+13.42&t=NKJV); [22:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+22.13&t=NKJV); [24:51](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+24.51&t=NKJV); [25:30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.30&t=NKJV)). This is an Eastern expression showing *deep grief*; and the contexts of these passages clearly show that things relating to *the rights of the firstborn*, not eternal life, are in view.

The rejection experienced by Esau is the last of five major warnings in the book of Hebrews, and this rejection constitutes an Old Testament type of that rejection that Paul referred to in [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+9.27&t=NKJV). The reference is to Christians who will have forfeited the rights of primogeniture, appearing in Christ’s presence at His judgment seat.

Many Christians are presently following the same path that Esau took (considering the birthright to be of little value), and such Christians will one day come to the end of the matter in exactly the same way as seen in Esau’s life. They, although presently in line to be blessed as the firstborn — Christians are presently being dealt with as “sons,” with a view to one day being adopted as *firstborn sons* ([Hebrews 12:5-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.5-8&t=NKJV)) — will have forfeited this right; and they will be rejected for the blessing.

The rights of the firstborn must be retained or there can be no blessing belonging to the firstborn. The “spiritual blessings” associated with *the heavenlies* in [Ephesians 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.3&t=NKJV) cannot be appropriated by Christians who forfeit the rights of primogeniture, for these blessings are intimately connected with *the inheritance belonging to the firstborn* ([Ephesians 1:10-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.10-18&t=NKJV)). These blessings are reserved for those who overcome the inhabitants of that heavenly land *during the present age*, who will be shown qualified to enter that land as *sovereigns during the coming age*.

Christ is presently in the process of “*bringing many sons to glory*” ([Hebrews 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.10&t=NKJV)). He, through the things that He suffered, has become the “*Captain* [Originator, Founder]” of *a salvation* associated with *sonship* — the “*so great a salvation*” of [Hebrews 2:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.3&t=NKJV).

In [1 Peter 1:9-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9-11&t=NKJV), suffering with respect to Christ’s sufferings is connected with both *the salvation of the soul* and *the glory to be revealed* (“*sufferings of Christ*” [[1 Peter 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.11&t=NKJV)] should literally be translated, “sufferings with respect to [on behalf of] Christ”). The reference is not to Christ’s sufferings but to Christians entering into these sufferings.

In [1 Peter 4:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.12-13&t=NKJV), such sufferings are connected with the trials and testing in James chapter one. *The trying of one’s faith* (working patient endurance) and *the sufferings with respect to Christ’s sufferings* (suffering through trials and testing) cannot be separated one from the other. That which is in view has to do with *patient endurance under trials and testing*, and the end of the matter in both James and 1 Peter is the salvation of one’s soul. It is being *approved* (as in [James 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.12&t=NKJV)) and being *placed in the position of a son* (as in [Hebrews 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.10&t=NKJV)), *realizing the rights of primogeniture* during the coming age.

Sovereignty

To exercise sovereignty during the coming age, *one must possess a crown*; and to possess a crown *one must first be approved* for the crown. Approval will occur before the judgment seat, and approval at this time will be based on *works that endure the fire* ([1 Corinthians 3:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.11-15&t=NKJV)).

The “*trying of one’s faith*,” working *patient endurance*, is inseparably associated with “*works*” in James. Comparing [Genesis 22:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.1ff&t=NKJV) with [James 2:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.21&t=NKJV) (along with the text leading into the passage in James) reveals that a servant’s works emanate out of his patient endurance under trials and testing; and viewing [James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV) as a whole, works are seen to emanate out of faith. It is faithfulness under trials and testing, resulting in works. Such works are those that God would have the one being tried and tested to carry out; and these are the type of works that will endure the fire at the judgment seat.

The trial of “*every man’s work*” *in fire* at the judgment seat will be with *a view to approval or disapproval — approval if found worthy, disapproval if not found worthy.*

This approval or disapproval will occur through testing, and the method of testing will be “*by* [‘in’] *fire*”:

*each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by* [in] *fire; and the fire will test* [test with a view to approval] *each one’s work of, what sort it is*. ([1 Corinthians 3:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+3.13&t=NKJV))

*Approval* at the judgment seat will be for a prior revealed purpose. God’s purpose in working patient endurance in a Christian’s life through trials and testing (progressively effecting maturity) is the corresponding issuance of works in his life, *the heart* of that which this entire process leads into in the epistle of James. *Approval* follows Christians allowing the Lord to work patient endurance in their lives; and *approval will*, in turn, be followed by *sovereignty* during the coming age ([Revelation 3:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+3.21&t=NKJV)).

1) To Receive a Kingdom, and to Return

During His earthly ministry, Christ delivered two companion parables to His disciples to graphically illustrate various aspects of the matter at hand — the parable of the talents ([Matthew 25:14-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.14-30&t=NKJV)), and the parable of the minas or pounds in the KJV ([Luke 19:11-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.11-27&t=NKJV)). The “*man*” or “*nobleman*” in the two parables called “*his own servants*,” delivered unto them “*his goods*,” commanded them to “*Do business* (KJV: ‘*occupy*’) *till I come*,” and then departed “*into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return*.”

The “*man*” or “*nobleman*” is *Christ*, the “*servants*” are *Christians*, “*his goods*” have to do with *His business*, and the “*far country*” is *heaven*. Christ has departed into heaven to receive a kingdom from His Father, with a view to returning for His servants (to reckon with them) following the reception of this kingdom (*cf*. [Daniel 7:9-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+7.9-14&t=NKJV); [Revelation 11:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+11.15&t=NKJV); [19:11ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11ff&t=NKJV)).

During the time of the Lord’s absence, His servants are to “*occupy*” themselves with that which is entrusted to their care. The “*ten servants*” and “*ten minas* (pounds)” in the gospel of Luke, showing *ordinal completion* in both instances, reveal that *all of His servants* and *all of His business* are in view. Christ called *all of His servants* and left them in charge of *all of His business* during the time of His absence.

While the parable of the pounds in Luke’s gospel reveals the overall scope of both the Lord’s servants and the Lord’s business (“*ten servants*,” “t*en minas* [pounds]”), the parable of the talents in the gospel of Matthew reveals the different portions of this business delivered to different servants within the overall scope of His dealings with His servants (“*And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to each according to his own ability* . . . . ”).

Simple teachings derived from comparing the two parables point to the fact that *every servant* of the Lord has been entrusted with some facet of *the Lord’s business* during the time of His absence. No servant has been overlooked; nor has any portion of *the Lord’s business* been withheld from His servants.

The one thing above all else required of servants is *faithfulness* ([1 Corinthians 4:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+4.2&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Luke 12:42-46](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+12.42-46&t=NKJV)). Servants of the Lord *must exercise faithfulness in carrying out that portion of the Lord’s business with which they have been entrusted.* “Success” is an entirely different matter. No servant has ever been called to be successful, only *faithful*. Success though will always follow faithfulness, whether man so recognizes that which the Lord deems as success or not.

Placing the entire matter over into the framework of the epistles of James and 1 Peter, it seems apparent that God brings about the necessary trials and testing in a Christian’s life that will move that Christian into that area of work (that portion of the Lord’s business) that has been outlined for his life (delivered to him by the Lord). The individual is to exercise faithfulness as he patiently endures trials and testing; and as he progressively matures in the faith after this fashion, the Lord brings about an outworking in his life of that facet of the Lord’s business entrusted to him (*cf*. [Philippians 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.6&t=NKJV)). Thus, such works, in reality, are those done under the direction and leadership of the Lord as the Christian exercises faithfulness to his calling.

All of this occurs for *a purpose*. In the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, the day eventually came when the “*man*” or “*nobleman*” returned to reckon with His servants — pointing to the return of Christ “*in the air*” for His servants and the subsequent reckoning “*at the judgment seat*” with His servants.

The *only concern at hand* in this reckoning in both Matthew’s and Luke’s accounts was *that which the servants had done with the Lord’s possessions that had been entrusted to their care during the time of their Lord’s absence*, and *the only matter in view beyond this reckoning was that of occupying positions of sovereignty in the kingdom.*

2) Well Done Good and Faithful Servant

According to both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, hearing a “*Well done* . . . .” from the Lord at the time He reckons with His servants is contingent on the servants having brought forth an increase through the use of the talents and/or pounds. The increase not only had to come from within the scope of that which the Lord had left in charge of *all His servants* (*the ten minas* [pounds]) but it also had to come from within the scope of that which the Lord had entrusted *individually to each servant* (*the various talents*).

In the parable of the minas (pounds), the servants were judged strictly on the basis of their use of the minas (pounds) during the time of the Lord’s absence. *Nothing else was in view.*

The increase was wrought *only through the use of that which the Lord had entrusted to their care*:

*Then came the first, saying, “Master, your mina* (KJV: pound) *has earned ten minas* (pounds).”

*And the second came, saying, “Master, your mina* (pound) *has earned five minas* (pounds).” ([Luke 19:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.16&t=NKJV), [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.18&t=NKJV))

And the revealed reward for faithfulness therein was *completely commensurate with the increase*:

*And he said to him* [the first servant], *“Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.”*

*Likewise he said to him* [the second servant], *“You also be over five cities.”* ([Luke 19:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.17&t=NKJV), [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+19.19&t=NKJV))

In the parable of the talents, a slightly different facet of the picture is presented. Judgment in this parable is based strictly on *the increase of that which was delivered to individual servants within the scope of their calling*, and an increase of the same proportion percentage-wise (though not necessarily in quantity) brought about identical commendations and rewards:

*So he who had received the five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, “Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents beside them.”*

*He also who had received two talents came and said, Lord, you delivered to me two talent; look, I have gained two more talents beside them.”* ([Matthew 25:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.20&t=NKJV), [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.22&t=NKJV))

The increase in each instance was one hundred percent, and the response of the Lord to both servants was identical:

*His Lord said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.”* ([Matthew 25:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.21&t=NKJV), [23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.23&t=NKJV))

The thought is not necessarily how *hard* or how *long* one works, but how *faithful one is in carrying out the task that the Lord has delivered into his hands during the time allotted* (*cf*. [Matthew 20:1-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+20.1-16&t=NKJV)). By comparing the parable of the talents with the parable of the minas (pounds), faithfulness among Christians to the task at hand is not always the same. Thus, it would seem apparent that there could be increases of less than or more than one hundred percent, allowing a two-talent Christian to realize an increase above that of a five-talent Christian, or vice versa. *The number of talents* is not really the issue. *Faithfulness to the task at hand* is that which God looks upon and requires.

And *a person always reaps that which he sows*, whether faithfulness or unfaithfulness is manifested ([Galatians 6:7-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+6.7-9&t=NKJV)).

*Blessings, rewards*, and *crowns* are for those exercising *faithfulness* in the proper use of the talents/minas (pounds) entrusted to them. A commendation of “*Well done .* . . .” from the Lord awaits Christians exhibiting faithfulness after this fashion. But, a task “well done” is just that — *one well done*.

“Jesus will never say ‘Well done’ to anyone *unless it has been well done*.”

— G. Campbell Morgan

3) You Wicked and Lazy Servant

In both the parable of the talents and the parable of the minas (pounds), *unfaithfulness* on the part of the Lord’s servants and *the end result of unfaithfulness* are shown in the latter part of each parable. Such unfaithfulness resulted in rebuke and loss in each instance; and also in each instance, the unfaithful servant was not associated in any manner whatsoever with positions of power and authority in the kingdom.

These things can be clearly seen by and through the Lord’s actions in both parables. That which the unfaithful servants possessed (the talents and minas [pounds]) was taken from them; and in the parable of the talents, the unfaithful servant was cast into “*outer darkness*.”

In the parable of the talents, one talent had been delivered to the servant who proved unfaithful. He was just as much a servant of the Lord and just as much in a position to bring forth an increase as the servants to whom five and two talents had been delivered; and, had this unfaithful servant brought forth an additional talent, which would have been an increase of one hundred percent, it is apparent that he would have received *the identical commendation* that the others received.

However, he hid his talent; it remained unused. He did not exercise faithfulness in that realm of service that the Lord had entrusted to him; and at the time when the Lord called all His servants before Him to ascertain how much each had gained through trading and trafficking in the Lord’s business (by and through each servant exercising faithfulness to that entrusted to his care), the unfaithful servant experienced *rebuke* and *loss*.

The case of the unfaithful servant in the parable of the minas (pounds) is very similar. He, as the other servants, could have received *authority* over one or more cities had he brought forth an increase; but he kept the mina (pound) “*put away in a handkerchief*” ([Matthew 25:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+25.20&t=NKJV)). He didn’t use the mina (pound). He didn’t involve himself in the Lord’s business during the time of his Lord’s absence. He proved unfaithful concerning that which the Lord had left in his care, during His time of absence. And, following the Lord’s return, at the time when the Lord called His servants before Him to ascertain how much each had gained through trading and trafficking (by and through each servant exercising faithfulness to that entrusted to his care), the unfaithful servant — as the unfaithful servant in the parable of the talents — experienced *rebuke* and *loss*.

The Kingdom

Two great mountain peaks dominate the whole of Scripture — *Calvary*, and *the Kingdom*.

Events depicted by the parable of the talents and the parable of the minas (pounds) both pick up at a point *beyond the events of Calvary*. It was at this time that the “*man*” or “*nobleman*” — Christ — called “*his own servants* [all of His servants],” delivered to them “*his goods* [all of His goods],” commanded them to “*Do business till I come*,” and then departed “*into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return*.”

Then the matter at hand, as is evident in both parables, has *one goal* in view — *the kingdom*. And the focal point in both centers on *the present activity of the Lord’s servants, in view of the coming kingdom of Christ.*

(Note that “the kingdom” is not *the main thing in view toward which everything moves* in these parables; rather, it is *the ONLY thing in view toward which everything moves in these parables*. And the present activity of the Lord’s servants, in view of the coming kingdom of Christ, is not *the main activity, with a view to a particular, revealed goal; rather, it is the ONLY activity, with a view to a particular, revealed goal*.

Attempting to read eternal verities [eternal salvation or eternal damnation] into these parables is *to completely misunderstand, misinterpret, and misrepresent that which the Lord has set forth*. And, beyond that, *it completely hides the truth of the matter taught in these parables. It does away with that which is taught in these parables*. And, beyond that, such a teaching can only present the salvation message to be carried to unsaved man in *a corrupted respect,* bringing works into a realm where works cannot exist.

It is plain that the servants in these two parables are those who had already availed themselves of the free gift of eternal salvation, wrought through Christ’s sacrificial death at Calvary. Such is evident from several observations:

*First*, these were the Lord’s “*own servants*.”

*Second*, they were the ones left in possession of the Lord’s “*goods*” during His time of absence.

*Third*, at the time of the Lord’s return, *all of the servants were called together at the same time and place to give an account*. If the unfaithful servants represent the unsaved, as some contend, these two parables teach a general judgment of saved and unsaved — something completely foreign to Scripture. Also, the fact that *all of the Lord’s servants were called to an accounting at the same time and place* leaves no possible room for that which is widely taught in many circles today — a selective resurrection and rapture of Christians at the end of the present dispensation.

*Fourth*, the issue at hand in the reckoning was “faithfulness,” “fruit-bearing,” with a view to occupying or being denied positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom [and *no* unsaved person can ever enter into such a judgment].)

The present activity of the Lord’s servants is made possible only because of the finished work of Christ on Calvary’s cross at His first coming; but, as is evident in both parables, this work of Christ — providing a propitiatory, vicarious sacrifice, effecting man’s redemption — was only an essential part of a much broader purpose.

In His own words, Christ revealed that His first coming involved two central issues: *His sufferings*, to be followed by *His glory* (*cf*. [John 3:14-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+3.14-16&t=NKJV); [18:37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+18.37&t=NKJV); [Luke 24:25-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.25-26&t=NKJV)).

Christ was born “*King of the Jews*”; and the turmoil caused by His birth (emanating from Satan through Herod) involved *His Kingship*, not things having to do with His also being “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (*cf*. [Matthew 2:1ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+2.1ff&t=NKJV); [John 1:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.29&t=NKJV)).

Simeon at the temple in Jerusalem, shortly after the birth of Jesus, saw “*the Lord’s Christ*,” the One who would effect “*the consolation of Israel*.” Simeon’s words, “. . . *mine eyes have seen your salvation* . . . *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel*,” refer to national blessings wrought through Israel’s Messiah — redeemed Israel occupying the nation’s proper place with respect to all of the surrounding Gentile nations ([Luke 2:25-32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+2.25-32&t=NKJV); *cf*. [Luke 2:36-38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+2.36-38&t=NKJV)). Such cannot exist apart from a restoration of the theocracy to Israel and God’s Son exercising His position as “*King of the Jews*” within this theocracy.

Before Christ began His public ministry, He met Satan face to face in the wilderness. The first man, the first Adam, through Satan’s confrontation with Eve, had been defeated; and it was necessary that the second Man, the last Adam, experience a similar confrontation Himself to show that He was fully qualified to redeem that which the first Adam forfeited in the fall.

The first Adam had been created to rule the earth in the stead of Satan, who had previously disqualified himself. However, through sin, the first Adam was also disqualified, allowing Satan to continue as ruler over the earth. The confrontation between Satan and the last Adam was with the same objective in view — *rulership over the earth, preceded by Calvary* (*cf*. [Genesis 1:26-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.26-28&t=NKJV); [Luke 4:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+4.5-6&t=NKJV); [24:21-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.21-27&t=NKJV)).

Christ’s appearance in the presence of Satan, showing that He was fully qualified to redeem that which the first Adam had forfeited in the fall, anticipated not only Calvary but also events beyond Calvary. It was at Calvary that Christ paid the price for man’s redemption, making it possible for man to ultimately be brought back into the position for which he had been created.

The entire earthly ministry of Christ centered on *His coming kingdom*, and His present ministry in the sanctuary centers on *the kingdom* as well. Then, when Christ comes forth from the sanctuary, all activity will continue to be with a view *to the kingdom, which will ultimately be realized*.

Christ’s message to Israel during His earthly ministry had to do with the kingdom. His ministry centered on *an offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel*. There was a call for national repentance, *for the kingdom of the heavens was at hand* ([Matthew 3:1-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+3.1-12&t=NKJV); [4:17-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+4.17-25&t=NKJV)).

However, Israel spurned the offer, *the kingdom* (that facet of the kingdom proclaimed, *the kingdom of the heavens*, not the kingdom covenanted to David) was taken from Israel, and a new nation — *the one new man “in Christ,”* the Church — was called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected. Thus, the Church, as Israel, was called into existence *for purposes surrounding this kingdom* ([Matthew 21:43](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+21.43&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 2:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.11-15&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 2:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.9-10&t=NKJV)).

But Christ, following His first coming, didn’t immediately ascend the throne (His own throne and David’s throne, not His Father’s throne where He is presently seated, awaiting that coming day). An entire dispensation has been set aside, during which the Spirit of God has been sent into the world to procure a bride for God’s Son (to reign as consort queen with the Son in His kingdom). And while the Spirit is in the world searching for the bride throughout the present dispensation, Christ is ministering on the Christians’ behalf in the Holy of Holies in the heavenly tabernacle (on the basis of His shed blood, shed at Calvary), *with the kingdom in view* ([Hebrews 4:11-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+4.11-16&t=NKJV); [9:11-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+9.11-12&t=NKJV); [10:19ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.19ff&t=NKJV)).

The birth from above, imparting spiritual life, is made possible through Christ’s finished work at Calvary. And the same One who died at Calvary is presently ministering, as High Priest, in the heavenly sanctuary. He is presently ministering after this fashion in order to provide a present cleansing (from defilement through contact with the world) for those having availed themselves of His past work at Calvary — *those destined to be “kings and priests,” the new order of “sons” about to be brought forth to rule in the coming kingdom* (*cf*. [John 13:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+13.8&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.10&t=NKJV); [1 John 1:6-2:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+1.6-2.2&t=NKJV); [Revelation 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+5.10&t=NKJV)).

Thus, everything in Scripture moves toward *that coming day when the kingdom will be realized*. This teaching begins in the first chapter of Genesis and pervades all Scripture. Man’s creation had to do with the kingdom; man’s fall had to do with *the kingdom*; and man’s redemption has to do with *the kingdom*. Christ’s past work had to do with *the kingdom*; and His present work is occurring with *the same end in view*. And matters are the same with the Spirit’s past and present work. *It is all about a kingdom to be realized on the seventh day, the seventh millennium, dating from Adam’s creation*.

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Christ’s past work had to do with *the kingdom*.

Christ’s present work is occurring with *the same goal in view*.

And matters are the same with the *Spirit’s past and present work*.

*It is all about a kingdom to be realized on the seventh day, the seventh millennium, dating from Adam’s creation*. This is the way Scripture opens in *Genesis*, this is the way Scripture continues from that point forward, and this is the way God will bring matters to pass after everything has been said and done.

Redeemed man is presently being called to *the throne in a heavenly realm*. There is *a salvation* out ahead, the salvation of the soul, which is *the greatest thing God has ever designed for the one whom He created and has redeemed*. This is a salvation that even the angels “*desire to look into*” ([1 Peter 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.12&t=NKJV)), for it includes *joint-heirship with God’s Son over all thing*s.

The trials and testing of life — effecting patient endurance, maturity in the faith — are with a view to approval at the judgment seat and subsequent positions of power and authority in the kingdom; and the instructed Christian knows that he is to “*count it all joy*” ([James 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.2&t=NKJV)) when subjected to all the multifaceted trials and testing that the Lord, for a purpose, brings to pass in his life.

*If we endure* [‘patiently endure’], *we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him* [not deny Christ *per se* but refuse to patiently endure], *He also will deny us* [refuse us a position with Him in the kingdom]. ([2 Timothy 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.12&t=NKJV))

(The word translated “*deny*” in [2 Timothy 2:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+2.12&t=NKJV) is *arneomai* in the Greek text, which could, as well, be understood and translated in the sense of “refuse,” which would be more in keeping with the overall thought in this verse. That which is set forth in the verse has nothing to do with eternal salvation. Rather, the subject, both textually and contextually, has to do with *patiently enduring under trials and testing, with a view to reigning with Christ.*

The thought in the latter part of the verse is not refusing or denying Christ, for the word “*Him*” is not in the Greek text. It is refusing or denying that which is previously seen in the text.

Following the thought, “If we patiently endure, we shall reign with Him,” *the remainder of the verse parallels the first part of the verse*. The continued text, as previously seen, reads, “if we refuse,” not “if we refuse him.” Refusing, contextually, *can only have to do with refusing to patiently endure*. And as well, by the same token, Christ refusing the one who does not patiently endure *can only have to do with refusing that person for a regal position with Him in His kingdom*.)

Concluding thoughts:

There is a day coming when every Christian will *render an account to his Lord*, and the present day is *the time of preparation for that coming day*. The present day is the time when the Lord’s servants are in possession of the various talents; and the present day is the time when a work is being performed in the lives of Christians that is connected with maturity in the faith, the proper use of the talents entrusted to them, etc. This day though will last only as long as God’s Son remains in the “*far country*.”

One day Christ will receive the kingdom from His Father and then return to reckon with His servants.

This will be an individual reckoning — “. . . *we must all appear . . . that every one may receive* . . . .”

And this reckoning will be based strictly on *each servant’s use of the talent/talents entrusted to his care during the time of his Lord’s absence.*

This is exactly what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he sought *to warn “every man,”* and *teach* “*every man in all wisdom*,” in order that he might *present “every man perfect* [mature, complete] *in Christ Jesus”* ([Colossians 1:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.28&t=NKJV)). The *warning* that Paul sounded had to do with the coming time of evaluation at the judgment seat. His message along this line was really threefold:

1) A present preparation.

2) A preparation with a view to a coming evaluation.

3) And a preparation and evaluation with a view to the kingdom to follow.

The reference to “*the hope of glory*” in [Colossians 1:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.27&t=NKJV), leading into Paul’s ministry in verse twenty-eight, has to do with that hope that Christians possess of one day occupying positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom. This is referred to elsewhere in Scripture different ways, *e.g., “that blessed hope”* ([Titus 2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+2.13&t=NKJV)), “*the hope set before us . . . as an anchor of the soul*” ([Hebrews 6:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.18-19&t=NKJV)), and “*the hope that is in you*” ([1 Peter 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+3.15&t=NKJV)). Paul, above everything else, did not want any Christian within the scope of his ministry to experience rejection/disapproval when he appeared in Christ’s presence at His judgment seat ([Colossians 1:28-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.28-29&t=NKJV)).

Issues of the judgment seat, *in every instance*, will result *in a just recompense*. *Every Christian will receive exactly what he deserves* — reward, or chastisement — in complete accordance with revealed faithfulness or unfaithfulness in carrying out or failing to carry out that portion of the Lord’s business which had been entrusted to him.

And this will be with a view to occupying or being denied positions of power and authority in the kingdom that will follow.

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[Appendix, The Outer Darkness](http://bibleone.net/JSC_A.htm) is not included in this book in this site, but refer to [Cast Outside into Outer Darkness](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-three.php#Cast%20Outside%20into%20Outer%20Darkness) in this site.